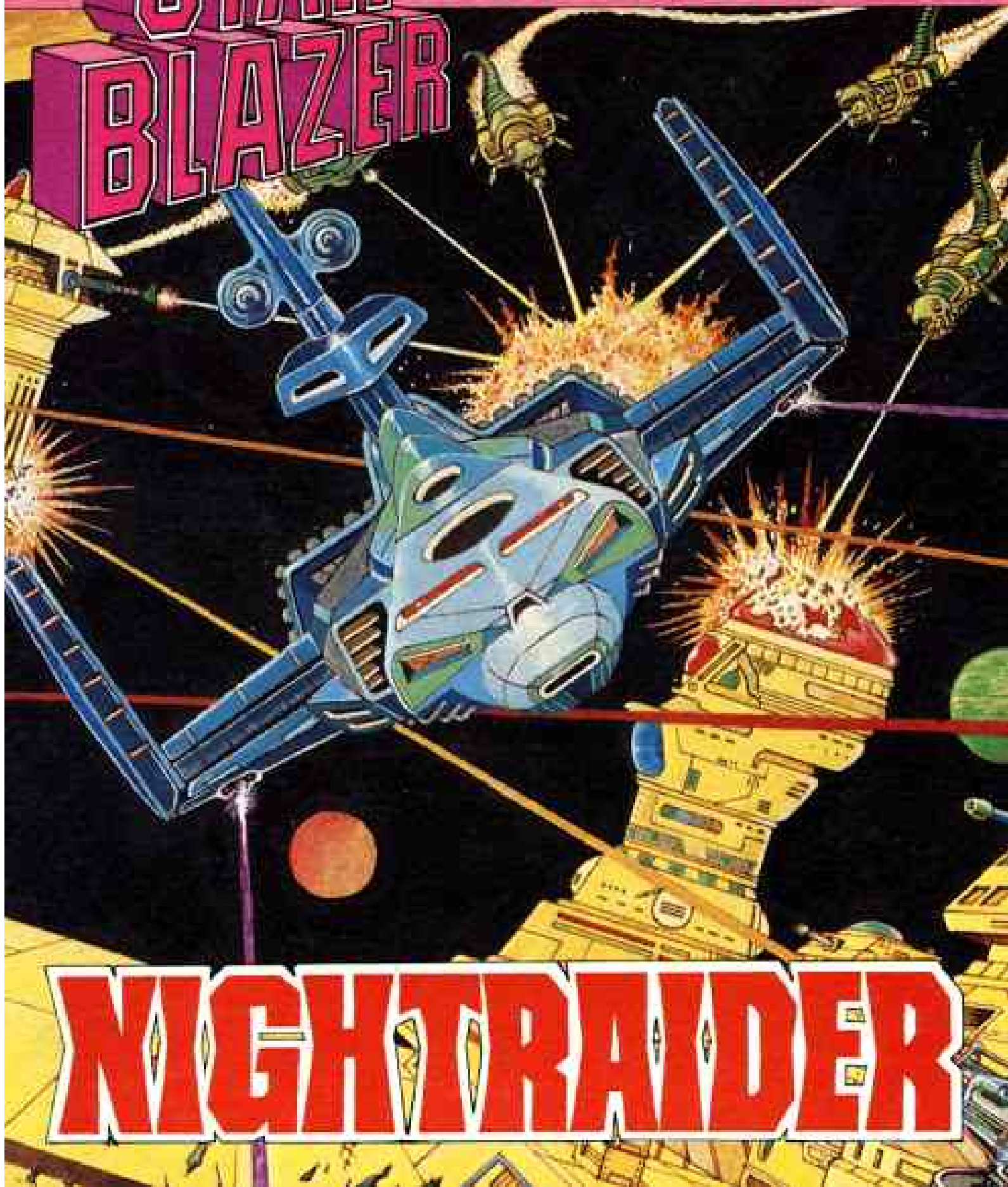


STAR BLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN
PICTURES No 172 24p



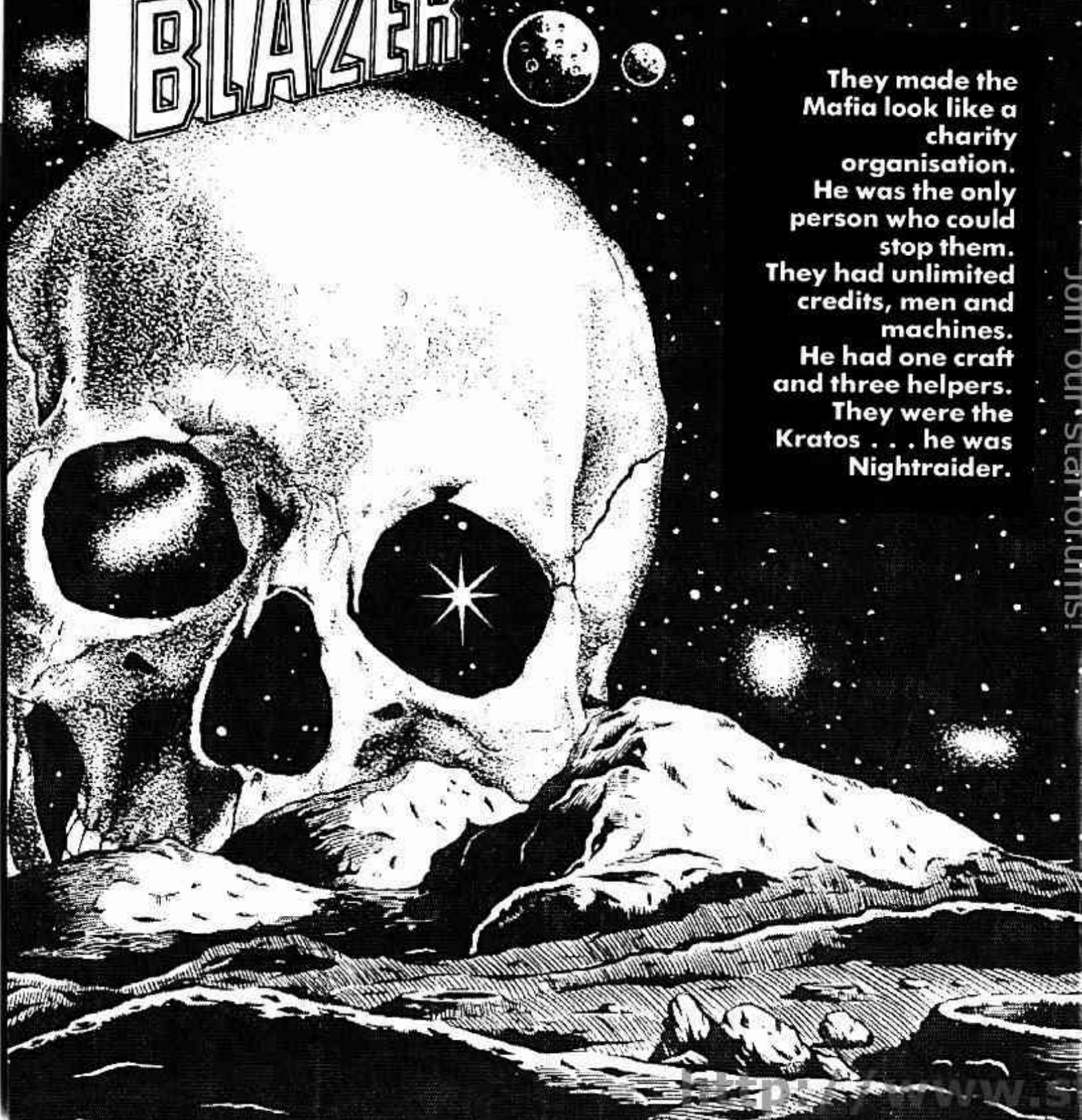
NIGHTRAIDER

STAR BLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES

They made the
Mafia look like a
charity
organisation.
He was the only
person who could
stop them.
They had unlimited
credits, men and
machines.
He had one craft
and three helpers.
They were the
Kratos . . . he was
Nightraider.

Join our starblazers!



NIGHTRAIDER

ON THE ASTEROID CHIRON, A LAW
STARSHIP, ASTERIOS, AWAITED A VISITOR: A
TURNCOAT, A SUPERGRASS, A SQUEALER.



WE'RE HERE TO PICK UP A
MEMBER OF THE EVIL
KRATOS CRIMINAL EMPIRE
WILLING TO GIVE
INFORMATION WHICH WILL
LEAD TO US SMASHING THEIR
NARCOTIC DRUG INDUSTRY.

ON BOARD THE SHIP WERE FOUR AGENTS LED BY GARRY CLARK, BETTER KNOWN AS NIGHTRAIDER.

ANYTHING ON THE SCREENS
YET, TYPHON?

NOTHING, CHIEF. JUST
ASTEROIDS AND SPACE DUST.

HOLD IT, SIR! THERE'S SOMETHING METALLIC
USING AN ASTEROID AS A SHIELD.

BEING BORN BLIND
ON TRITON, URSA WAS AN IDEAL
NAVIGATOR-PILOT, SINCE NO SIGHTED
PERSON COULD USE THE SHIP'S NEUROWEB
COMPUTERISED SENSOR SYSTEM AND REMAIN SANE.

HOOKED INTO THE NEUROWEB, URSA BECAME PART OF THE SHIP — ITS SENSORS WERE HIS SENSES. HE DETECTED THE TINY SHUTTLE EVEN AS IT SLIPPED FROM COVER.

HERE HE COMES, SIR.
BEARING EIGHTY-TWO.

THE SHUTTLE LANDED, DOCKED, AND THE SINGLE OCCUPANT BOARDED THE ASTERIOS, GREATLY TO SAMURO, THE CYGNAN'S, CONSTERNATION.

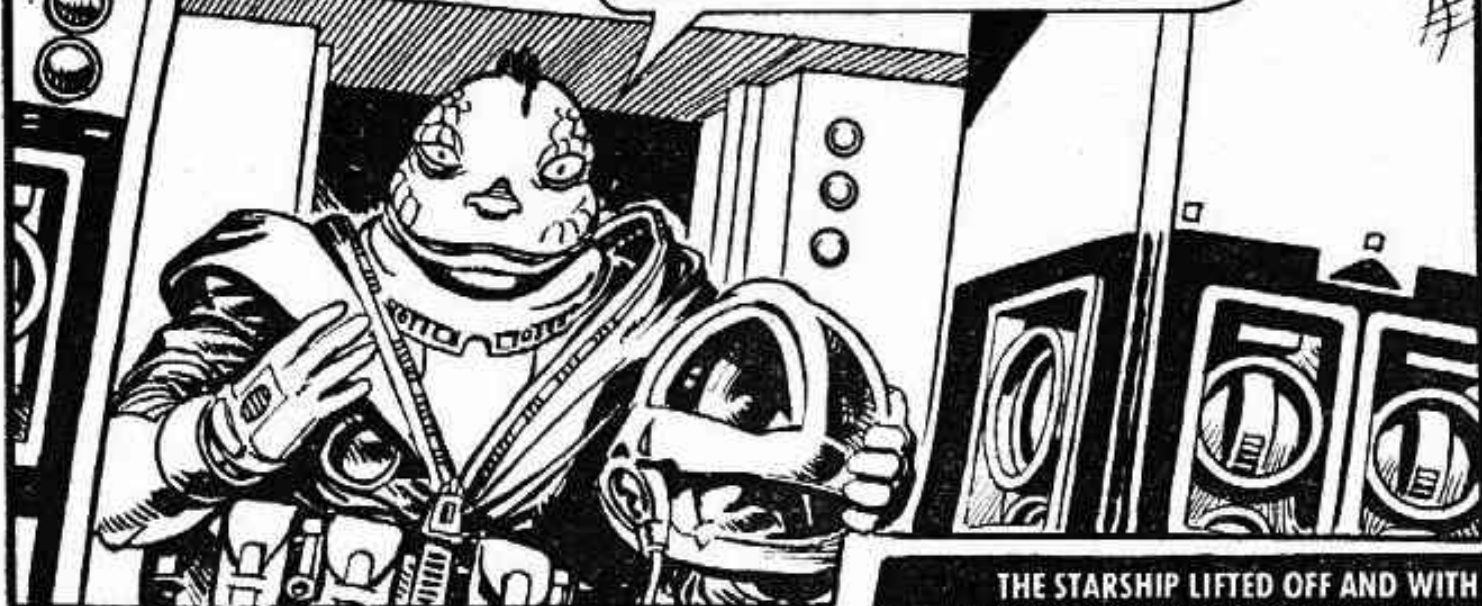
ABOMINATION! IT'S
AN ANDROMORPH!

EASY, SAMURO! HE'S
ON OUR SIDE, REMEMBER!



THE AIRLOCK DOOR HISSED OPEN—

GOOD-DAY, PEOPLE OF EARTH — I AM CRIOS. BEFORE I LEAD YOU THROUGH THE RED SPOT, THERE ARE CONDITIONS I MUST MAKE. AS YOU SEE I AM AN ANDROMORPH — A BIO-CONSTRUCT BANNED FROM ANY CIVILISED PLANET. BUT I WISH TO LIVE ON EARTH.



MY PRICE FOR BETRAYING MY KRATOS OVERLORDS IS CITIZENSHIP OF EARTH. I MUST BE RECLASSIFIED AS HUMAN.



I'LL DO ALL I CAN, BUT I CAN PROMISE NOTHING. BUT FIRST, PART OF THIS DEAL WAS THE LOCATION OF THE KRATOS CRIMINAL ORGANISATION'S DRUG BASE, AND ITS DESTRUCTION! WHERE IS IT?

THE STARSHIP LIFTED OFF AND WITH DIRECTIONS FROM CRIOS, URSA SENT IT PLUNGING TOWARDS THE DEADLY RED SPOT OF JUPITER.

FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY, PILOT — A DEGREE OFF AND THIS SHIP WILL BE TORN APART BY THE CORIOLIS WINDS.



THE ASTERIOS ENTERED THE MAELSTROM, AND WAS IMMEDIATELY ENGULFED BY THE TREMENDOUS WINDS THAT SPUN ETERNALLY AROUND THE GAS GIANT.



INSIDE THE FRAIL SHIP, THE CREW WERE BATTERED UNMERCIFULLY.

SENSOR-SCREENS GONE! I CAN'T SEE A THING OUT THERE NOW!



IT'S UP TO YOU NOW, NAVIGATOR. USE THE SHIP'S INFRA-RED SENSORS AND YOU'LL SEE A TRAIL THROUGH THE MAZE. FOLLOW IT. AND YOU, WEAPONMASTER — USE MASS-DETECTORS TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR DRAGONS!

THE DRAGONS OF JUPITER WERE KRATOS DEFENCE DRONES THAT FIRED SUPERHEATED HYDROGEN—

DRAGONS, SIR!
TWO OF THEM!

EVASIVE ACTION, URSA! SAMURO — MAN ATOM CANNONS AND PRIME PROTON TORPEDO TUBES!







THERE'S THE FORTRESS!
GOOD SHOOTING, SAMURO!

GERYON WAS THE KRATOS
DRUG FORTRESS, FLOATING IN
THE CALM EYE OF THE RAGING
RED SPOT.

NARROWLY AVOIDING A STREAM OF DEADLY SUPERHEATED
GAS, THE STARSHIP PLUNGED DEEPER INTO JUPITER'S
ATMOSPHERE.



WE'VE MADE IT!
WHAT NOW, CRIOS?



KEEP LEFT — IT'S LESS WELL
DEFENDED, AND A GOOD STRIKE
INTO THE HANGAR DECKS COULD
WELL FINISH IT.

WITH ALL WEAPONS FIRING, THE ASTERIOS WARPED STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE HANGAR DECKS.

BLASTERS AND TORPEDOES!
WE'VE GOT THEM RUNNING!



URSA — GET US IN CLOSE.
SAMURO — WHEN WE'RE ON TOP
OF THE HANGAR, FIRE EVERY
TORPEDO WE HAVE!



DRAGON CRAFT ATTACKED, SPITTING OUT SUPERHEATED HYDROGEN, BUT URSA DODGED IT EASILY.

DELAY THE TORPEDOES, SAMURO. CAN YOU SHOOT THAT DRAGON DOWN?

I'LL TRY!

A CANNON SHOT HIT THE DRONE SQUARELY.

WELL DONE! NOW, URSA, LET'S TRY NOT TO LEAVE TOO MUCH PAINT ON THE BASE'S HULL!

FULL POWER!

GOOD! LET'S HOPE WE MAKE ENOUGH SPACE BECAUSE ONCE OUR TORPS BLOW, THE EFFECT OF THE BLAST AMONGST ALL THESE ATMOSPHERIC HYDROCARBONS ...



THE KRATOS DRUGS BASE ERUPTED
WITH A VIOLENT CONCUSSION, AND THE
FLAMMABLE ATMOSPHERE OF THE RED SPOT BURST INTO LIFE.

BUT AS JUPITER'S VIOLENT WINDS BLEW OUT THE FLAMES, ANOTHER MENACE DRIFTED IN.

JOVIAN VACUUM FEEDERS! ALL THAT HEAT'S ATTRACTED THEM.

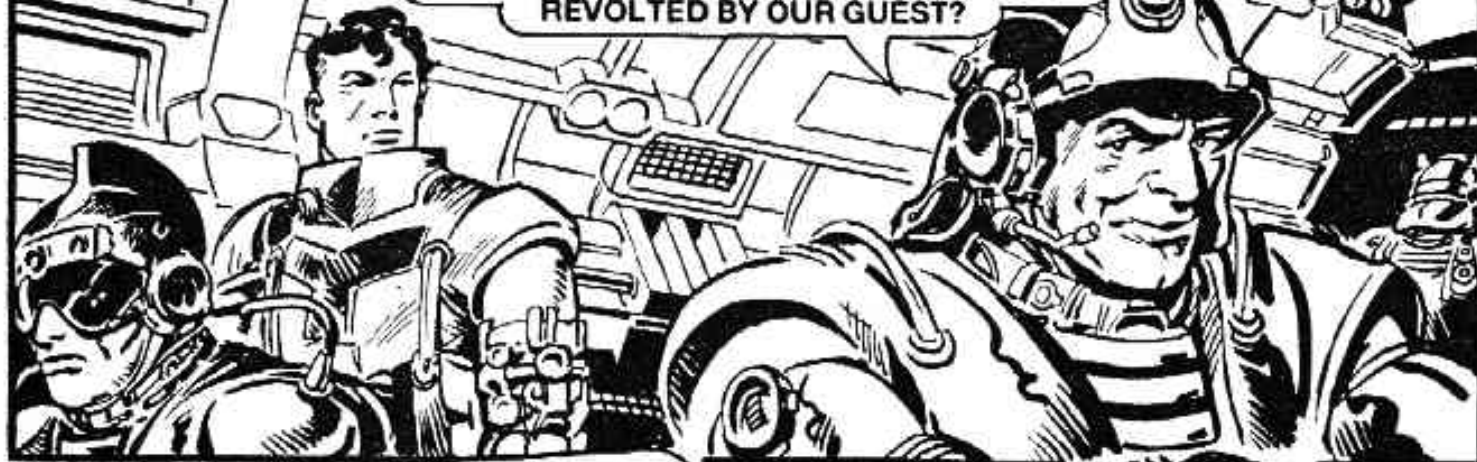
EVASIVE ACTION! WE MIGHT OUTFRAN THEM AS LONG AS WE STAY CLEAR OF THOSE TENTACLES.

MADE IT!

THE STARSHIP BLASTED THROUGH.

THE ASTERIOS PULLED CLEAR OF JUPITER AND RACED BACK TO EARTH.

ALL SCREENS CLEAR, CHIEF. NOW WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT EXACTLY AN ANDROMORPH IS — AND WHY SAMURO'S SO REVOLTED BY OUR GUEST?



GARRY BEGAN TO EXPLAIN THAT TEN YEARS PREVIOUSLY, DURING THE CLONE WARS, BIOLOGICALLY CONSTRUCTED ANDROMORPHS WERE USED IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE HUMANS COULDN'T GO. BUT ROBOTS DEVELOPED QUICKLY AND PROVED LESS FALLIBLE THAN ANDROMORPHS. THE ANDROMORPHS WERE RECALLED TO BE RECYCLED, BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT AS ANDROMORPHS WERE HUMAN SUBSTITUTES THEY HAD CERTAIN RIGHTS. RECYCLING WAS DEEMED MURDER. SO INSTEAD, THE FEDERATION DECLASSIFIED THEM AS HUMANS AND SENT THEM INTO EXILE.



... SAMURO IS A CYGNAN, FROM THE PURE BRED HIGH CASTE! HE SEES ANDROMORPHS AS "CREATIONS OF THE DEVIL", AND HIS RELIGION DEMANDS THAT HE ELIMINATE ANYTHING EVIL.

ON EARTH, THE ARRIVAL OF NIGHTRAIDER'S TEAM AND THEIR GUEST CAUSED MORE THAN A LITTLE EXCITEMENT—

THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION HAS ANNOUNCED THAT DUE TO PUBLIC REACTION THEY WILL RECONSIDER THEIR DECISION TO RECLASSIFY THE ANDROMORPH, IN ORDER TO ALLOW HIM ... IT ... TO LIVE AMONG US.



THE ASTERIOS LANDED AMIDST AN ANGRY DEMONSTRATION.



THREE FIGURES LEFT THE SHIP—

THE NATIVES SEEM RESTLESS TONIGHT, SAM. I HOPE THOSE STUNNERS ARE FULLY-CHARGED.

MONSTER! KEEP OFF EARTH, YOU CREATURE!



DESPITE THE GUARDS' STUN-STICKS, THE RAGING CROWD SURGED TOWARDS THE FLEEING TRIO.

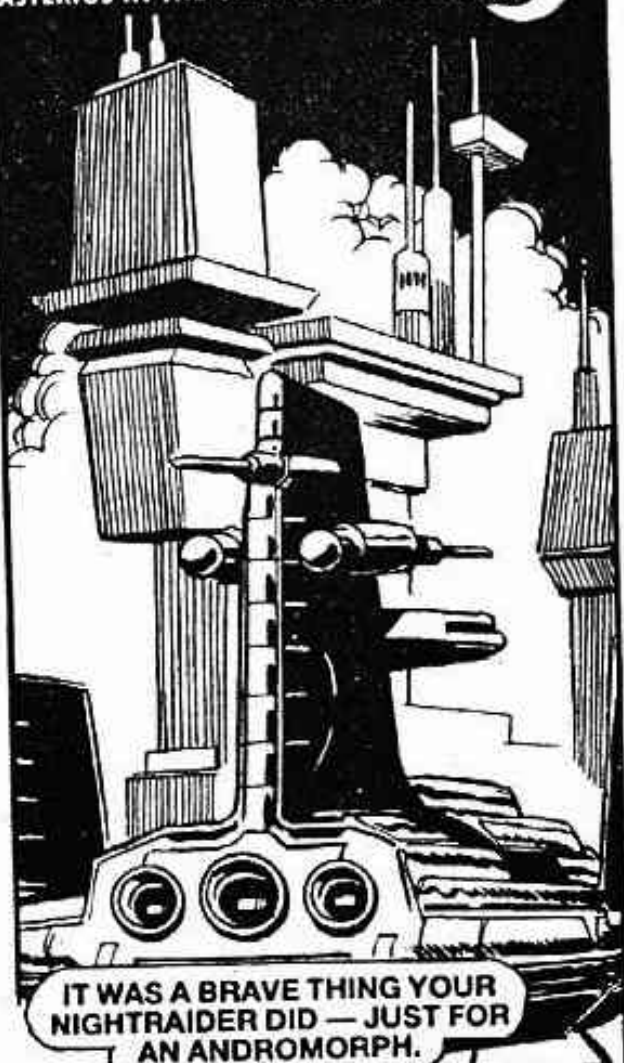
BUT AS THE MOB CLOSED IN, THE COVERED FIGURE THREW BACK HIS COAT.

GOOD DAY, FOLKS! DECOY RUN OVER! NOW IT'S UP TO SPACEPORT SECURITY TO GET SOME LAW BACK!

WONDER HOW URSA'S DONE?



UNNOTICED BY THE CROWD, A TINY FLOATER HAD SPED AWAY FROM THE ASTERIOS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.



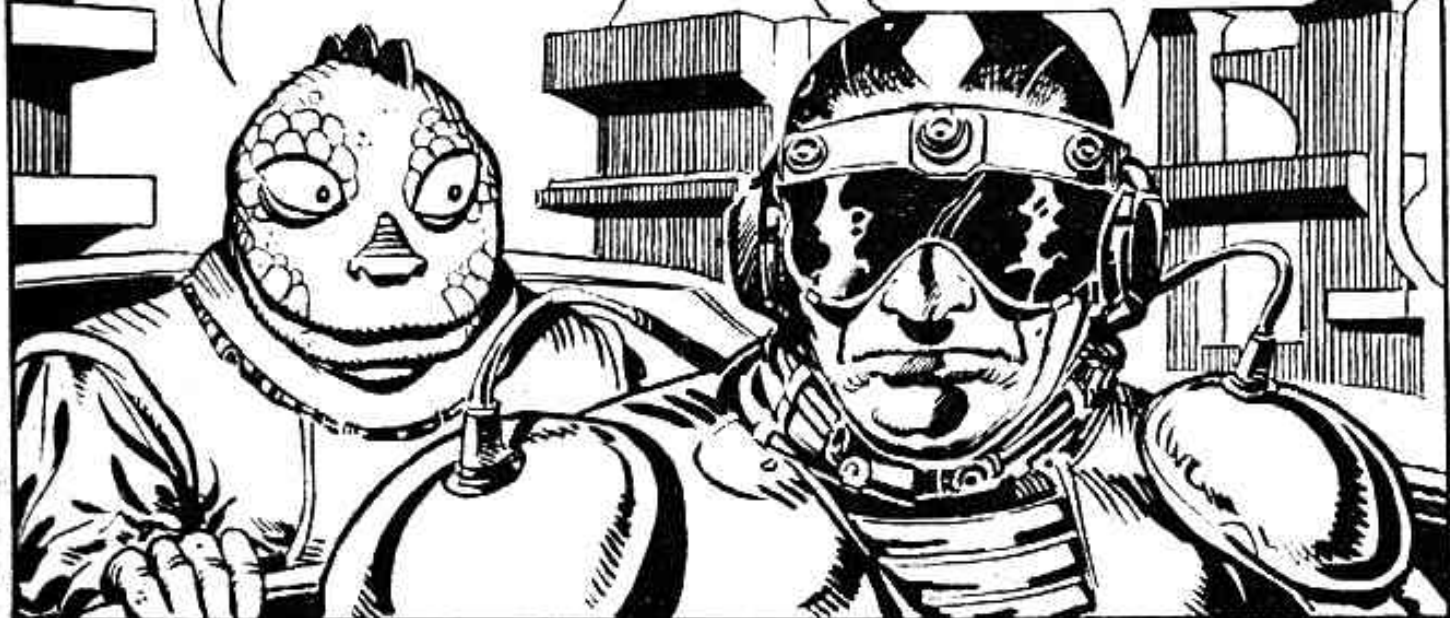
IT WAS A BRAVE THING YOUR NIGHTRAIDER DID — JUST FOR AN ANDROMORPH.

HE IS AN HONORABLE MAN!



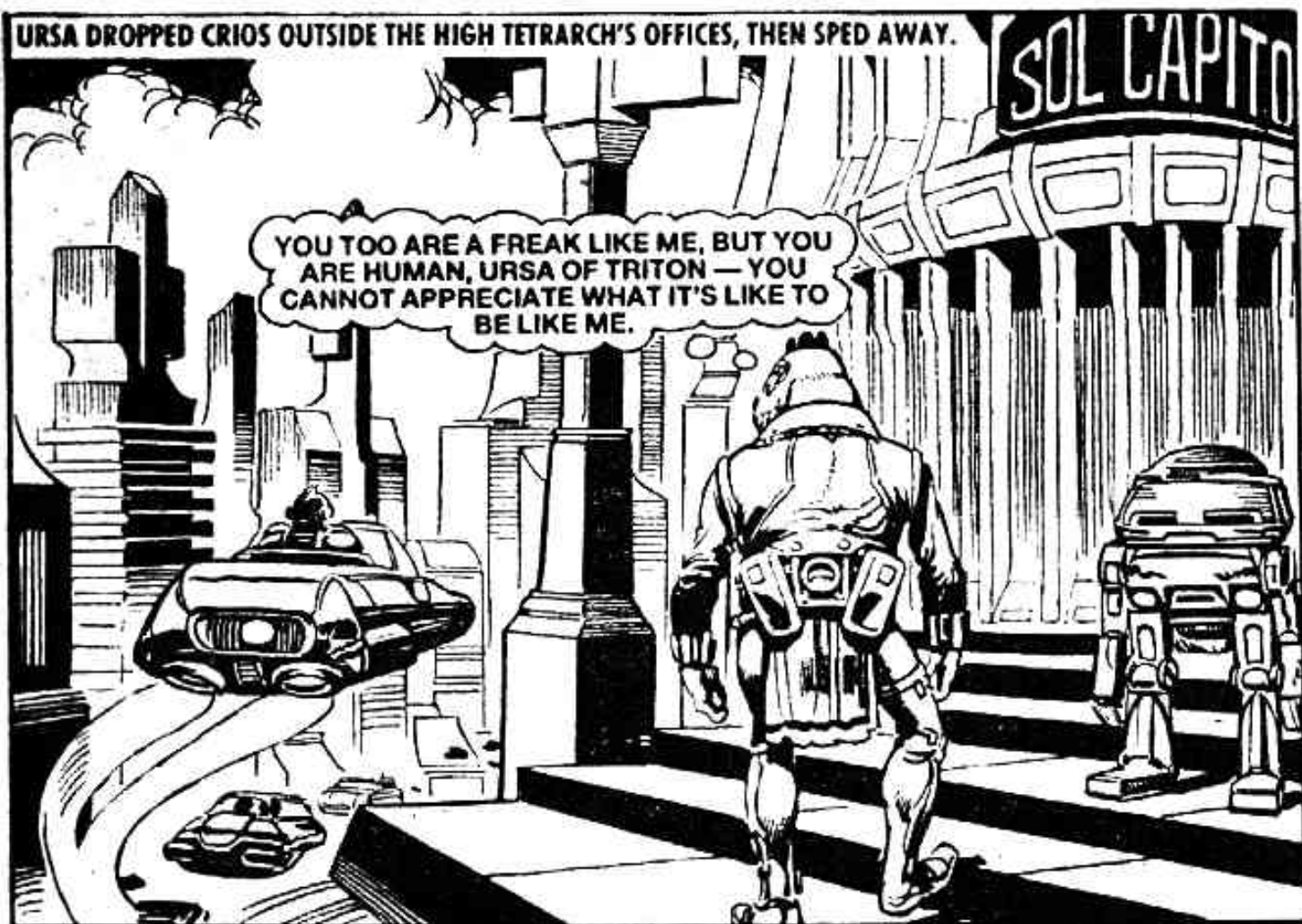
IT WOULD SEEM ALL HUMANS ARE NOT LIKE THOSE AT THE SPACEPORT. YOU AND NIGHTRIDER... TELL ME, WHY IS HE SO CALLED?

I WAS GOING BLIND AND TO COVER FOR ME, HE BEGAN RAIDING IN CONDITIONS THAT SUITED ME. DARKNESS OF SPACE, NIGHT TIME... EVENTUALLY THE NIGHTRIDER NAME STUCK.

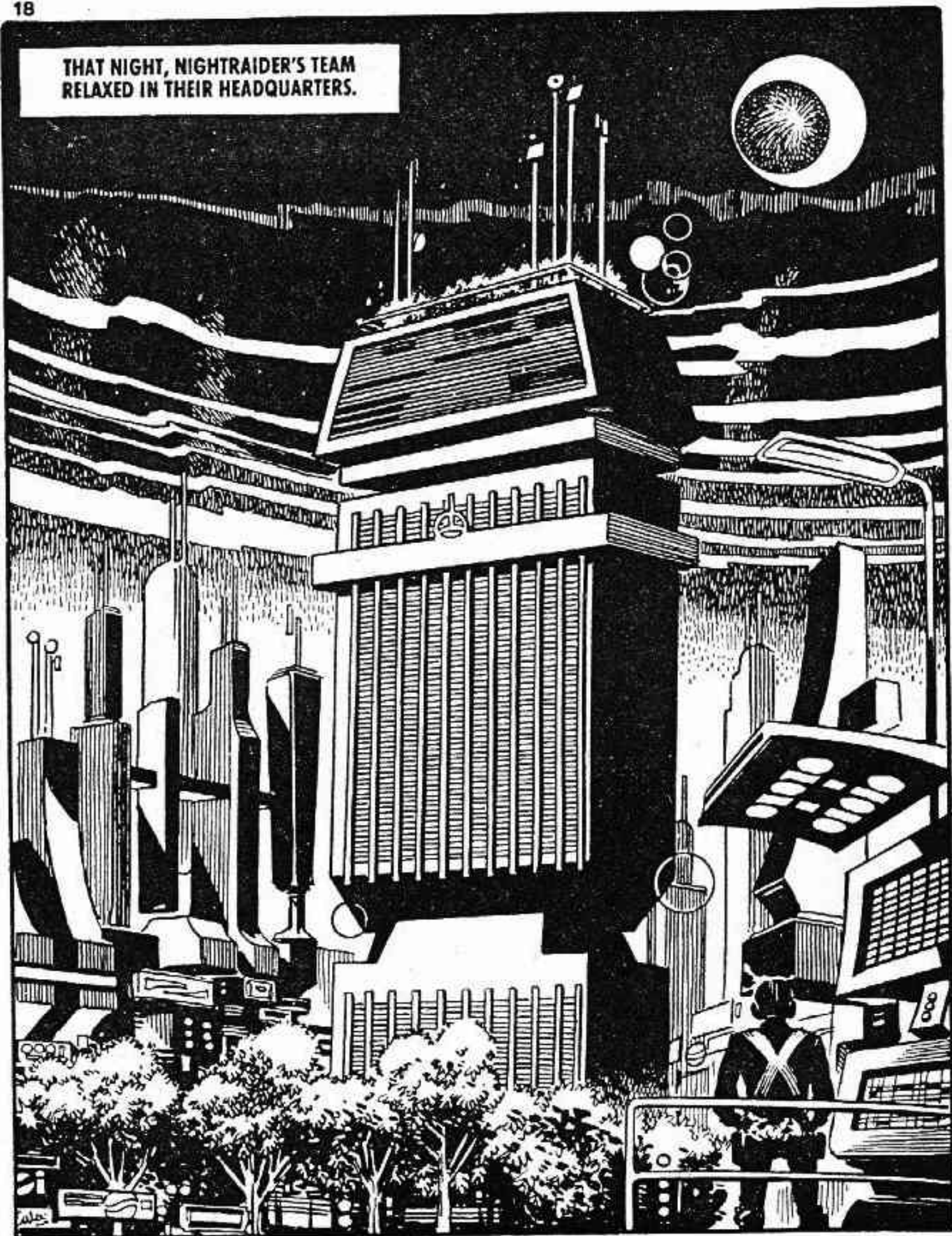



URSA DROPPED CRIOS OUTSIDE THE HIGH TETRARCH'S OFFICES, THEN SPED AWAY.

YOU TOO ARE A FREAK LIKE ME, BUT YOU ARE HUMAN, URSA OF TRITON — YOU CANNOT APPRECIATE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE LIKE ME.



THAT NIGHT, NIGHTRAIDER'S TEAM
RELAXED IN THEIR HEADQUARTERS.

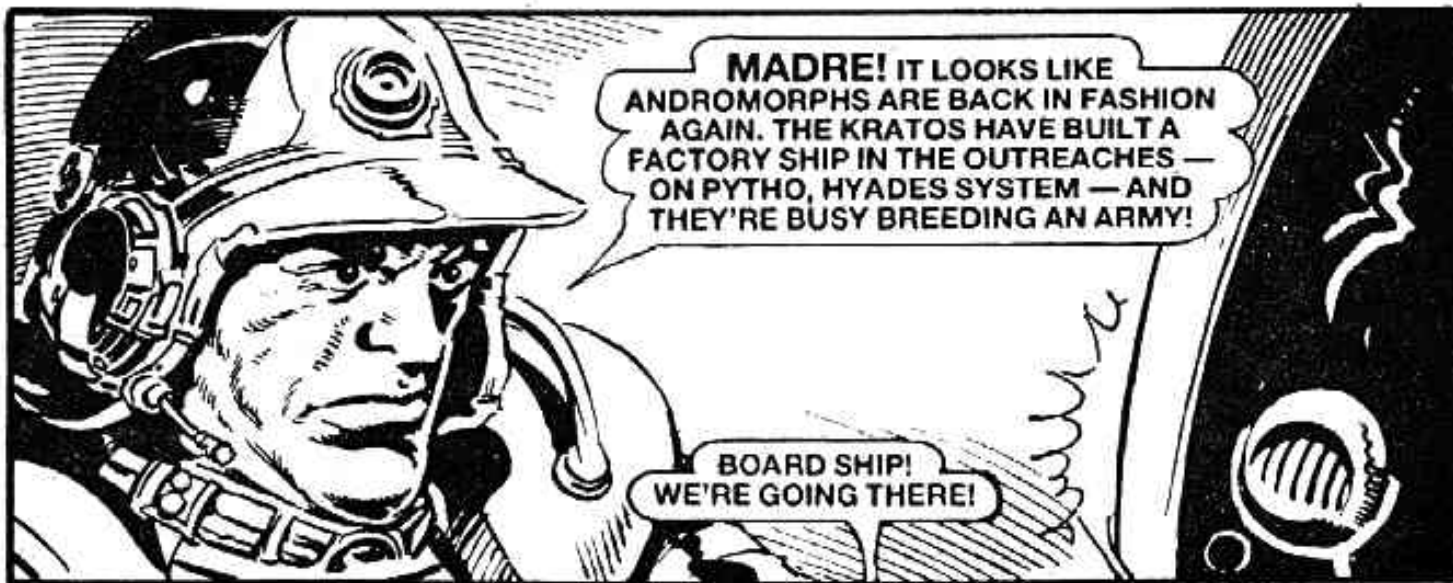




SO WE DESTROYED THE KRATOS DRUG DISTRIBUTION CENTRE. IF YOU CARE TO LOOK OUT OF THAT WINDOW YOU'LL SEE THE KRATOS STILL MAKING A FORTUNE EVERY MOMENT...! THEY CONTROL EVERYTHING!

CAN THE DOOM AND GLOOM, SAM. I'M GETTING SOMETHING THROUGH.

WITH ITS FASTER-THAN-LIGHT HYPERWAVE LINKS, THE INTERNEXION TRANSMITTER ALLOWED ALL LAW BASES INSTANT ACCESS TO INFORMATION STORED IN ALL THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS IN THE FEDERATION AND OUTREACHES. USING SOME OF CRIOS' INFORMATION, TYPHON BEGAN SEARCHING.



MADRE! IT LOOKS LIKE ANDROMORPHS ARE BACK IN FASHION AGAIN. THE KRATOS HAVE BUILT A FACTORY SHIP IN THE OUTREACHES — ON PYTHO, HYADES SYSTEM — AND THEY'RE BUSY BREEDING AN ARMY!

BOARD SHIP!
WE'RE GOING THERE!

ON THAT VERY PLANET, AT THAT
VERY MOMENT ANDROMORPH
FORCES WERE BEING
LOADED INTO A
STARFRIGATE.

IF YOUR ARMY IS SUCCESSFUL
ON IDAS, CELAINO, IT SHOULD
WIPE OUT SOME OF THE
DISHONOUR BY YOUR BROTHER,
CRIOS.

ANDROMORPHS HAVE NO
BROTHERS, OVERLORD JORJEO
— WE WERE SIMPLY BRED FROM
THE SAME CELL-MATRIX.



JORJEO WAS THE KRATOS
OVERLORD.

ONCE THE PLANET
IDAS IS UNDER OUR
CONTROL, WE WILL
HAVE A PLANET WELL
WITHIN THE
FEDERATION. NOT TO
MENTION CONTROL
OF DRUGS!

THE KRATOS STARFRIGATE AND CELAINO'S
FACTORY SHIP LIFTED OFF FROM PYTHO.

— AND JOINED THEIR ESCORT
FOR THE PLANET IDAS.

ON IDAS, THE FIFTH PLANET IN THE CENTAURI SYSTEM, WAR HAD RAGED FOR SEVERAL YEARS BETWEEN TWO CONTINENTS, GRENTERRA AND NEWREACH. THE DRUG ASTRAPENE WAS REFINED FROM THE IDAN WOLFSHEAD PLANT — GROWN ONLY IN GRENTERRA.



IF NEWREACH SHOULD WIN, THE KRATOS WOULD LOSE A BIG INVESTMENT. THE NEW ANDROMORPH ARMY WERE TO SEE THAT NEVER HAPPENED.

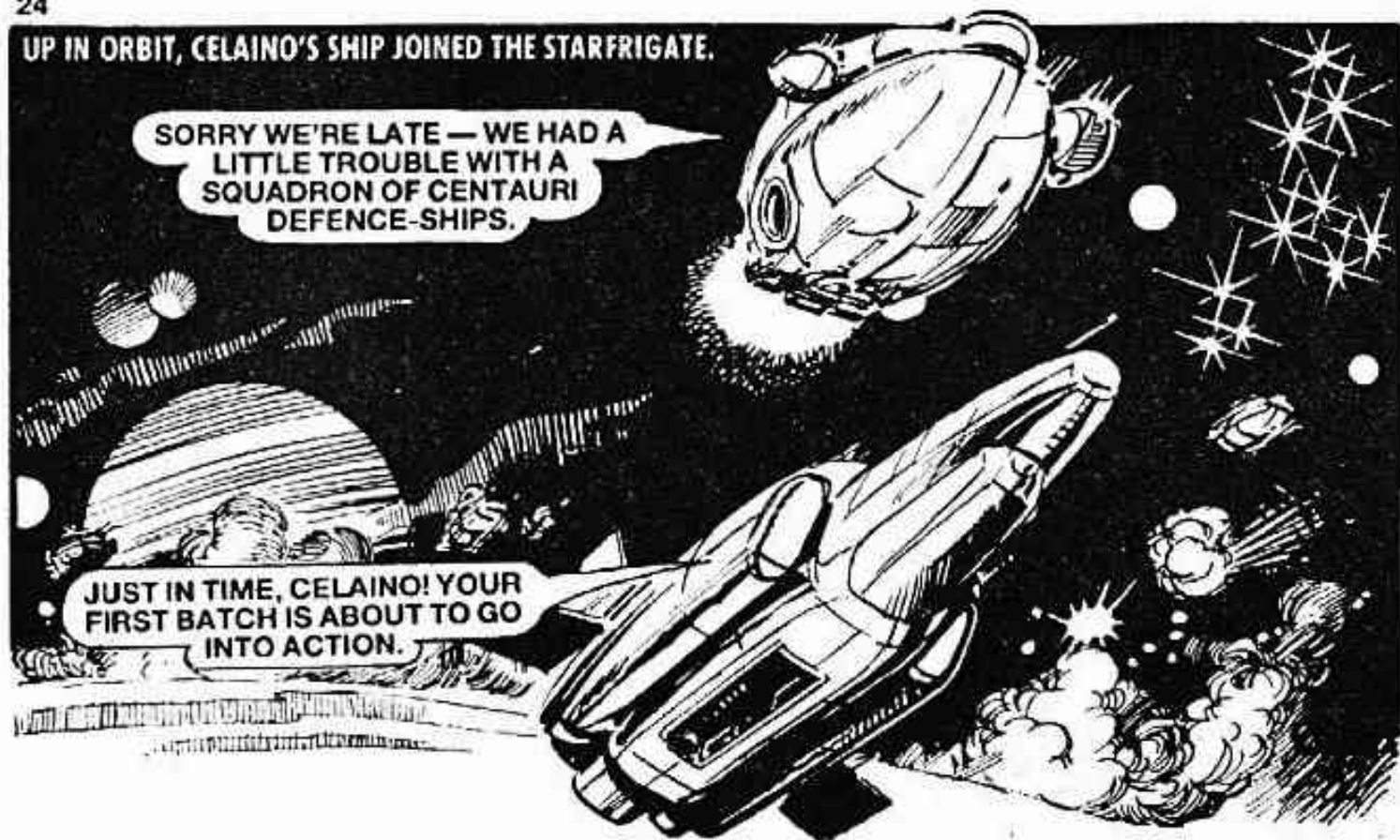




UP IN ORBIT, CELAINO'S SHIP JOINED THE STARFRIGATE.

SORRY WE'RE LATE — WE HAD A
LITTLE TROUBLE WITH A
SQUADRON OF CENTAURI
DEFENCE-SHIPS.

JUST IN TIME, CELAINO! YOUR
FIRST BATCH IS ABOUT TO GO
INTO ACTION.



AN EXCELLENT IDEA, CELAINO. EACH
ANDROMORPH ACTING AS PART OF A REACTION
CHAIN. LINK THEM UP, AND YOU HAVE THE
BIGGEST TRANSNUCLEAR EXPLOSION THIS
SIDE OF ALPHA CENTAURI!

NEW BATCH OF RADIATION-PROOF
ANDROMORPHS READY TO LAND.



EXCELLENT! THE
IDAN WOLFSHEAD
CROP IS OURS — THE
KRATOS WILL BECOME
THE RICHEST
ORGANISATION IN THE
GALAXY!



MEANWHILE, THE ASTERIOS NEARED ITS DESTINATION.

COMING OUT OF HYPERDRIVE, SIR.
PYTHO AHEAD, TWO THOUSAND KICKS.

WHAT DOES THE SENSORCOMM
READ, TYPHON?

IT DOESN'T! THE WHOLE MUD-BALL
SEEMS TO BE DESERTED.

RIGHT! YOU, SAMURO AND I
WILL GO DOWN IN THE
SHUTTLE. URSA CAN LOOK
AFTER THINGS UP HERE.

THE THREE MEN BOARDED THE SHUTTLE AND DROPPED TO PYTHO'S BARREN SURFACE.



QUIET AS A GRAVE, CHIEF. NOT EVEN A COLD VIRUS DOWN HERE.

LEAVING THE SHUTTLE, THEY WARILY CROSSED THE DESERT.

THE WHOLE AREA IS RADIATED! I DON'T LIKE THIS! THE KRATOS WOULD NOT GO WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE.



I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, SAMURO ...

... THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING LEFT BEHIND.



NO SOONER HAD GARRY SPOKEN —

JUPE! REJECTED ANDROMORPHS
LEFT BEHIND TO DISCOURAGE
SNOOPERS.



**SAMURO ACTIVATED HIS BIO-ACCELERATOR CIRCUIT,
INCREASING HIS REACTION TIME A HUNDREDFOLD.**





SUDDENLY, A SILENCE FELL AND THOSE ANDROMORPHS STILL ALIVE, BACKED OFF —

SOMETHING OUT OF A NIGHTMARE CRAWLED TOWARDS THEM.



EVEN SAMURO'S AMPLIFIED REFLEXES WERE NO MATCH FOR THE LURCHING HORROR.

GARRY RAISED HIS LEFT ARM —

I'VE NO CHOICE, I SUPPOSE. IT HAD TO HAPPEN ONE DAY. I'LL HAVE TO USE MY NEUTRON BEAMER.

IT'S LIKE FIGHTING A WHOLE ARMY!

THE DEADLY NEUTRON BEAM STRUCK THE CREATURE, KILLING IT INSTANTLY.

AAAAAA... AAARGH!
SUCCESS — BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

UNKNOWN TO THE OTHERS, EVERY TIME HE FIRED THE NEUTRON BEAMER, DEADLY RAYS OF Q-RADIATION SWEEPED THROUGH HIS BODY SERIOUSLY DAMAGING HIS INTERNAL ORGANS.

SILENTLY, GARRY CRUMPLED TO THE DUST, AS THE OTHERS FOUGHT THE ANDROMORPHS.

YOU DID IT, CHIEF!
THE THING'S DEAD!

TYPHON! SOMETHING'S WRONG
WITH THE NIGHTRIDER!



HOLDING THE ENRAGED MONSTERS OFF, THEY CARRIED THEIR
SEMI-CONSCIOUS LEADER BACK TO SAFETY —

PHOENIX ... RE-JUV
CHAMBER ...

USE MY BLASTER TO HOLD THEM OFF,
TYPHON. I CAN CARRY HIS HONOUR TO
THE SHUTTLE WHILST MY AMPLIFICATION
CIRCUITS ARE STILL ON.



URSA! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO THE CHIEF AND WE'RE LIFTING OFF. ONCE WE'RE CLEAR, HIT THE PLANET WITH PHOTON MINES — FULL STERILISATION PATTERN!

RIGHT, TYPHON.

THE PHOTON MINES DETONATED JUST ABOVE PYTHO'S SURFACE, DESTROYING THE LAST SURVIVING ANDROMORPHS.

URSA — PREPARE SICKBAY, THE LORD JUSTICE IS IN A BAD WAY!

ONCE NIGHTRIDER WAS INSTALLED IN THE SICKBAY, THE ASTERIOS LEFT ORBIT AND STREAKED BACK TOWARDS EARTH.

**PHOENIX... RE-JUV...
GET... TO PHOENIX...**

**WHO'S PHOENIX?
OR WHERE?**

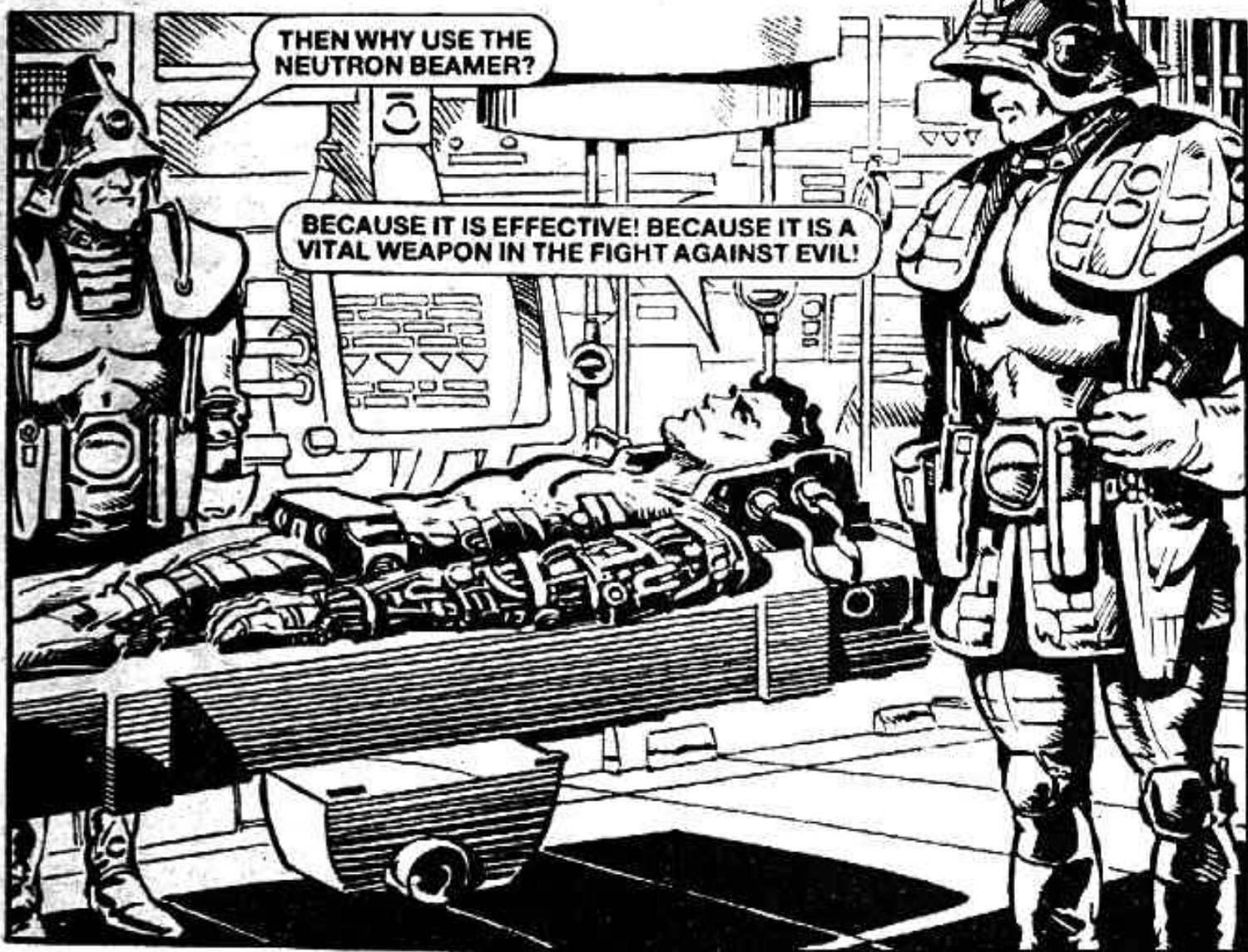
IT'S HIS PRIVATE HOME — A GIANT SATELLITE ORBITING EARTH. HE MUST WANT TO GO THERE.

NIGHTRAIDER CAME TO —

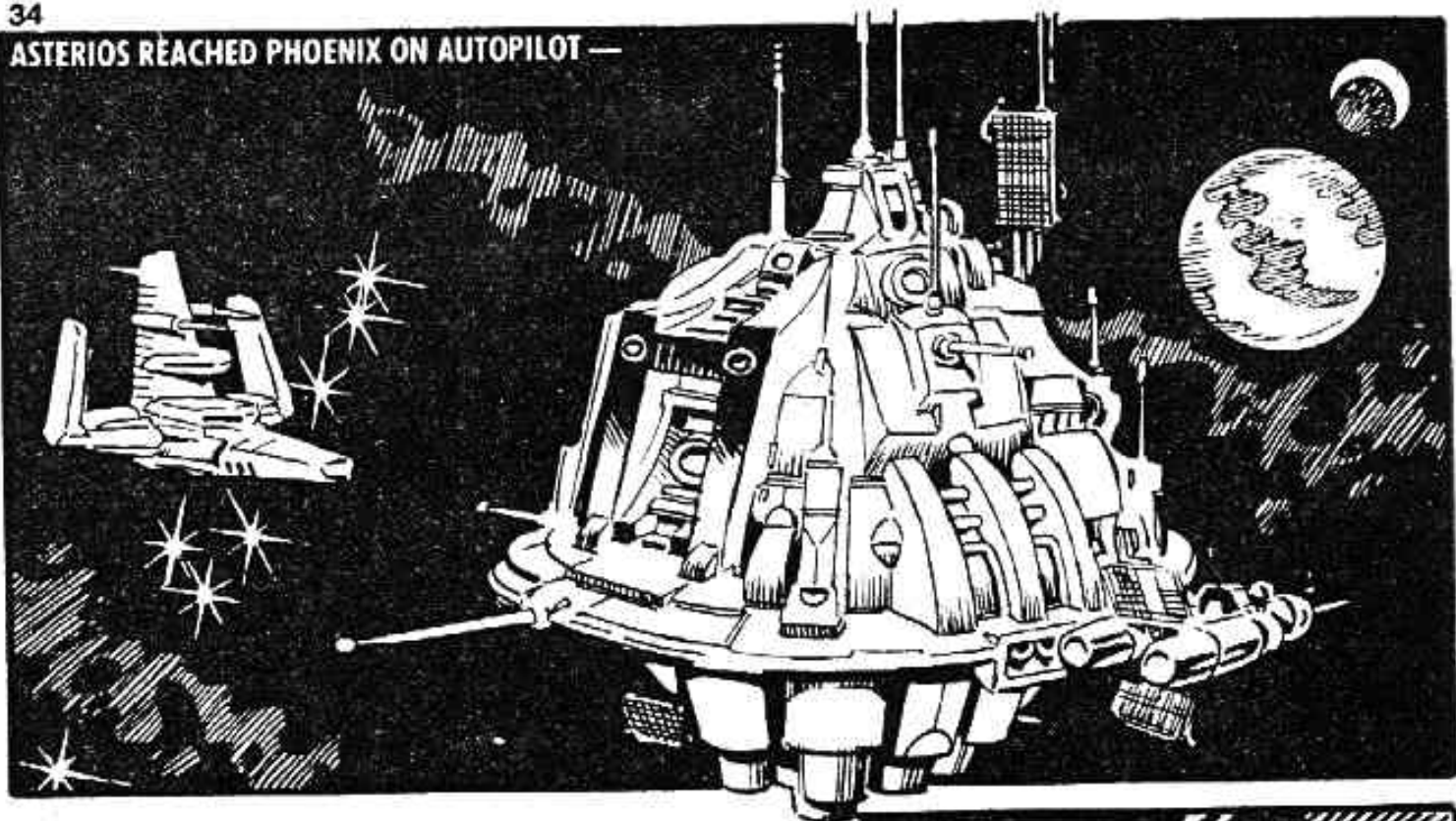
SAMURO!
WHAT'S HAPPENED?

RELAX, YOUR HONOUR. WE ARE NEAR
PHOENIX! YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED —
AND SO DO WE, NOW.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL
US, YOUR HONOUR?



ASTERIOS REACHED PHOENIX ON AUTOPILOT —



AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD, THE AGENTS GOT HIM TO THE RE-JUV CHAMBER —

I HOPE HE'LL
BE WELL SOON.



THIS IS HARDLY THE TIME FOR
PLAYING WITH YOUR COMPUTERS!

YOU THINK SO? THIS IS OUR
STRONG, SILENT CHIEF'S
PERSONAL DIARY. HE'LL LAST A
STANDARD YEAR IF HE DOES
NOTHING MORE, BUT IF HE USES
THAT NEUTRON WEAPON AGAIN,
HE'LL BE DEAD WITHIN THREE
WEEKS!





AND WHEN WE
MEET THE
KRATOS AGAIN,
SURELY HE
MUST USE IT!

EXACTLY!
WE'VE GOT ONE
CHOICE —
CAPTURE
WHOEVER'S
GROWING
THESE THINGS
FOR THE
KRATOS, AND
FORCE HIM TO
ANDROMORPH-
ISE NIGHT-
RAIDER

WASTING NO TIME, THE THREE
AGENTS RE-BOARDED THE ASTERIOS
AND BLASTED OUT OF THE
SYSTEM ON FULL HYPERDRIVE.



RESIDUAL HEAT TRAILS
LEADING FROM PYTHO
SUGGEST THE KRATOS
HEADED TO THE CENTAURI
SYSTEM, URSA. PROBABLY
THE IDAS WARS.

IDAS IT
IS THEN.

THE STARSHIP DROPPED INTO NORMAL SPACE — AND TROUBLE.



OH, NO! YOUR NAVIGATION'S
TOO GOOD, URSAL!

INTRUDER ALERT! STANDING ORDER
28 — DISABLE BUT DO NOT DESTROY.

THE ASTERIOS WAS INSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY WELL-ARMED INTERCEPTORS.



I NEVER KNEW THE KRATOS
HAD SO MANY SHIPS!

ON HIS SENSOR SCREENS, TYPHON SPOTTED THE BIGGER ARMADA SHIPS DRIFTING CLOSER ...

THERE ARE TOO MANY TO DEAL WITH!

DON'T I KNOW IT! AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THOSE BIG BOYS GET IN RANGE?

HE SOON HAD AN ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION.

INTRUDER — I SUGGEST YOU HEAVE TO AND SURRENDER.

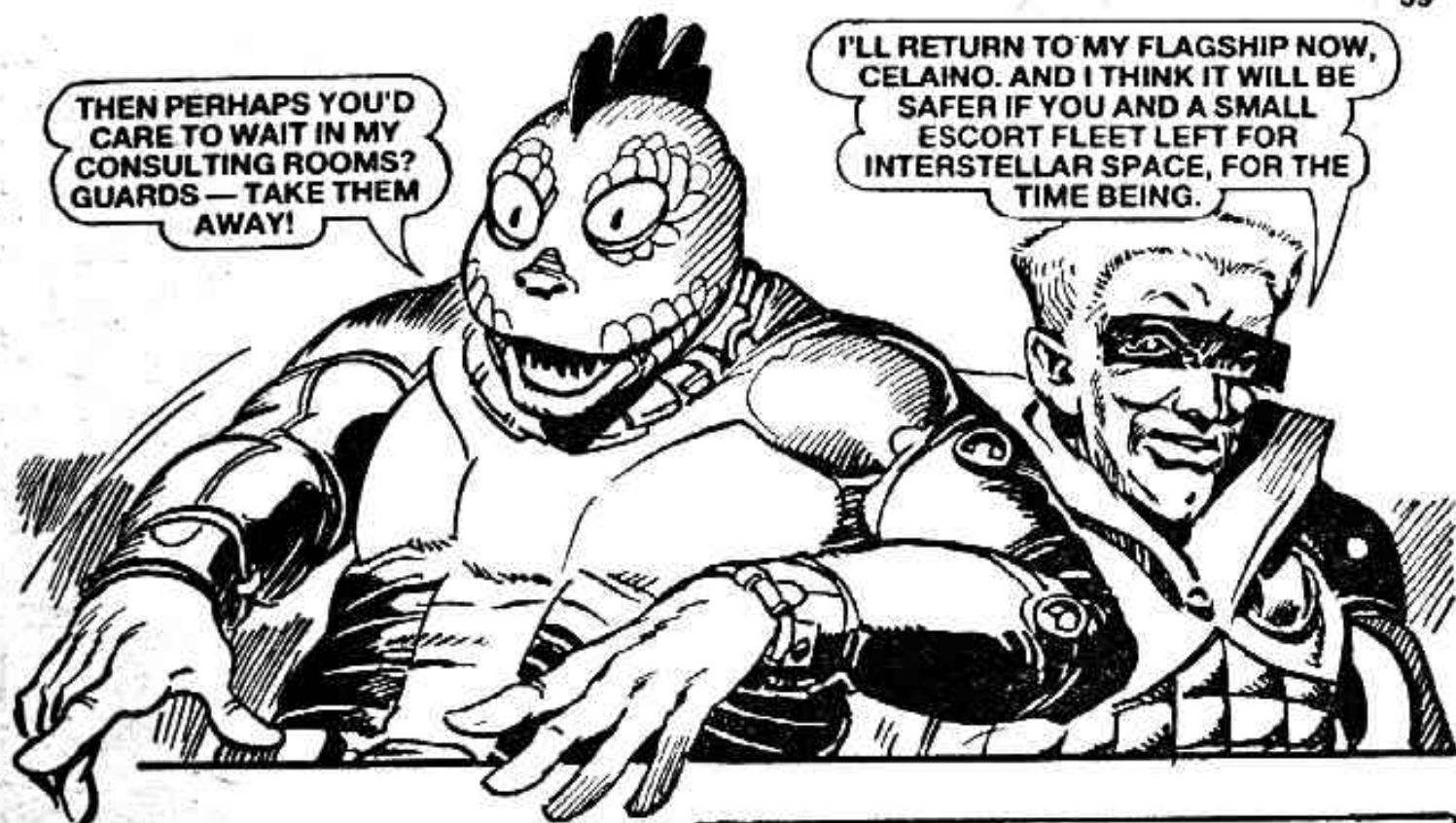
DO WE HAVE A CHOICE?

THEY WERE ESCORTED TO THE FACTORY SHIP AND IN ITS VAST HOLD, THEY DISEMBARKED.

MAY I INTRODUCE YOUR
NEW HOST, CELAINO.

SO YOU'RE THE GOOD DOCTOR, OR
WHATEVER? WE WERE JUST ON OUR
WAY TO SEE YOU.





THEN PERHAPS YOU'D
CARE TO WAIT IN MY
CONSULTING ROOMS?
GUARDS — TAKE THEM
AWAY!

I'LL RETURN TO MY FLAGSHIP NOW,
CELAINO. AND I THINK IT WILL BE
SAFER IF YOU AND A SMALL
ESCORT FLEET LEFT FOR
INTERSTELLAR SPACE, FOR THE
TIME BEING.

THE THREE AGENTS LOCKED AWAY INSIDE,
THE ANDROMORPH FACTORY SHIP LEFT
ORBIT AND MADE TOWARDS DEEP SPACE.



BACK AT PHOENIX, NIGHTRAIDER'S REPAIRS WERE
ALMOST FINISHED — WHEN AN UNANNOUNCED
VISITOR ARRIVED.





NIGHTRAIDER AND CRIOS BOARDED A CRAFT.

I MUST GO AFTER THEM, BUT I
CANNOT ASK YOU TO COME.

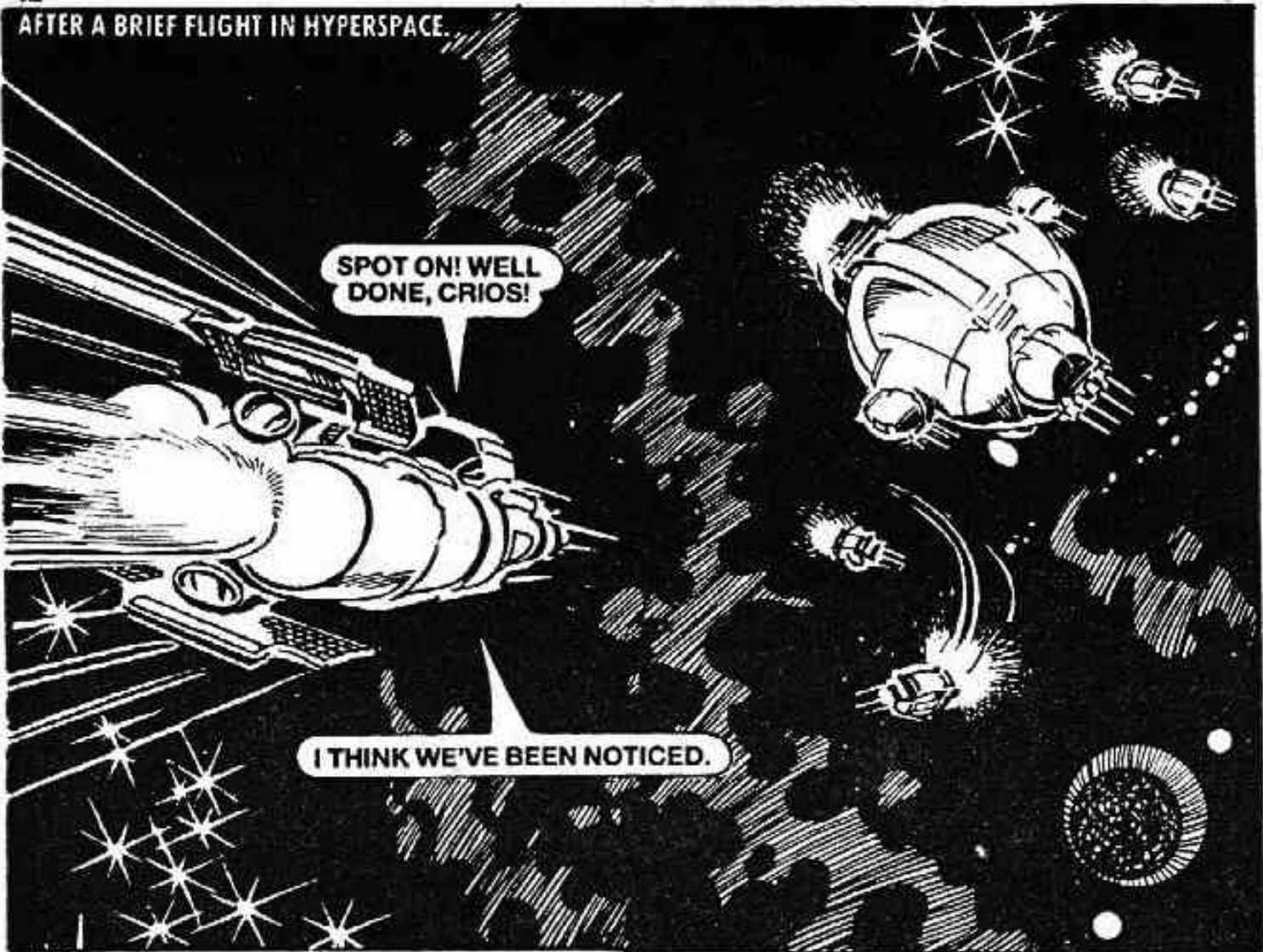
THEN DON'T ASK! I WAS BRED FOR COMPUTER
WORK, AND MY NON-HUMAN BRAIN CAN COPE
WITH THE NEUROWEB FOR A WHILE WITHOUT
GOING INSANE. NOW TELL ME, HOW ARE WE
GOING TO FIND SAMURO, TYPHON AND URSULA IN
THIS BIG GALAXY?

ALL OPERATIVES HAVE TRACERS
BUILT INTO THEIR TEETH, WITH A
RANGE OF TEN LIGHT-YEARS. I'LL
PATCH THE SIGNAL THROUGH
INTO THE WEB. AS LONG AS
THEY'RE NOT IN HYPERSPACE,
WE'LL FIND THEM.

I HAVE THEM! VECTOR 29.3
BY 40. AZIMUTH 38.

GARRY QUICKLY PLOTTED THE
CO-ORDINATES INTO THE COMPUTER, AND
THE HYPERION WARPED INTO HYPERSPACE.

AFTER A BRIEF FLIGHT IN HYPERSPACE.



SPOT ON! WELL
DONE, CRIOS!

I THINK WE'VE BEEN NOTICED.

KEEP HER STEADY AS YOU CAN. THE MAIN
WEAPON ON HYPERION IS A PHASER PULSE.
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH IT?



I KNOW THE THEORY! AN ENERGY PULSE
THAT AGITATES MOLECULES, LIKE A
MICROWAVE COOKER.

NIGHTRAIDER FIRED AT THE ONCOMING
STARFRIGATE.

THE HYPERION SWOOPED
TOWARDS THE KRATOS
VESSEL.

WELL, THE THEORY SEEMS
TO WORK, CRIOS!

MAKE FOR THE FACTORY SHIP! THE
LAST FRIGATE WILL NOT SHOOT
FOR FEAR OF HITTING IT!


MAYBE SO, BUT I DON'T THINK THE
FACTORY SHIP HAS ANY SUCH QUALMS!



NO PROBLEM! HYPERION'S MANOEUVRABLE
ENOUGH TO DODGE FIXED CANNON-FIRE ...

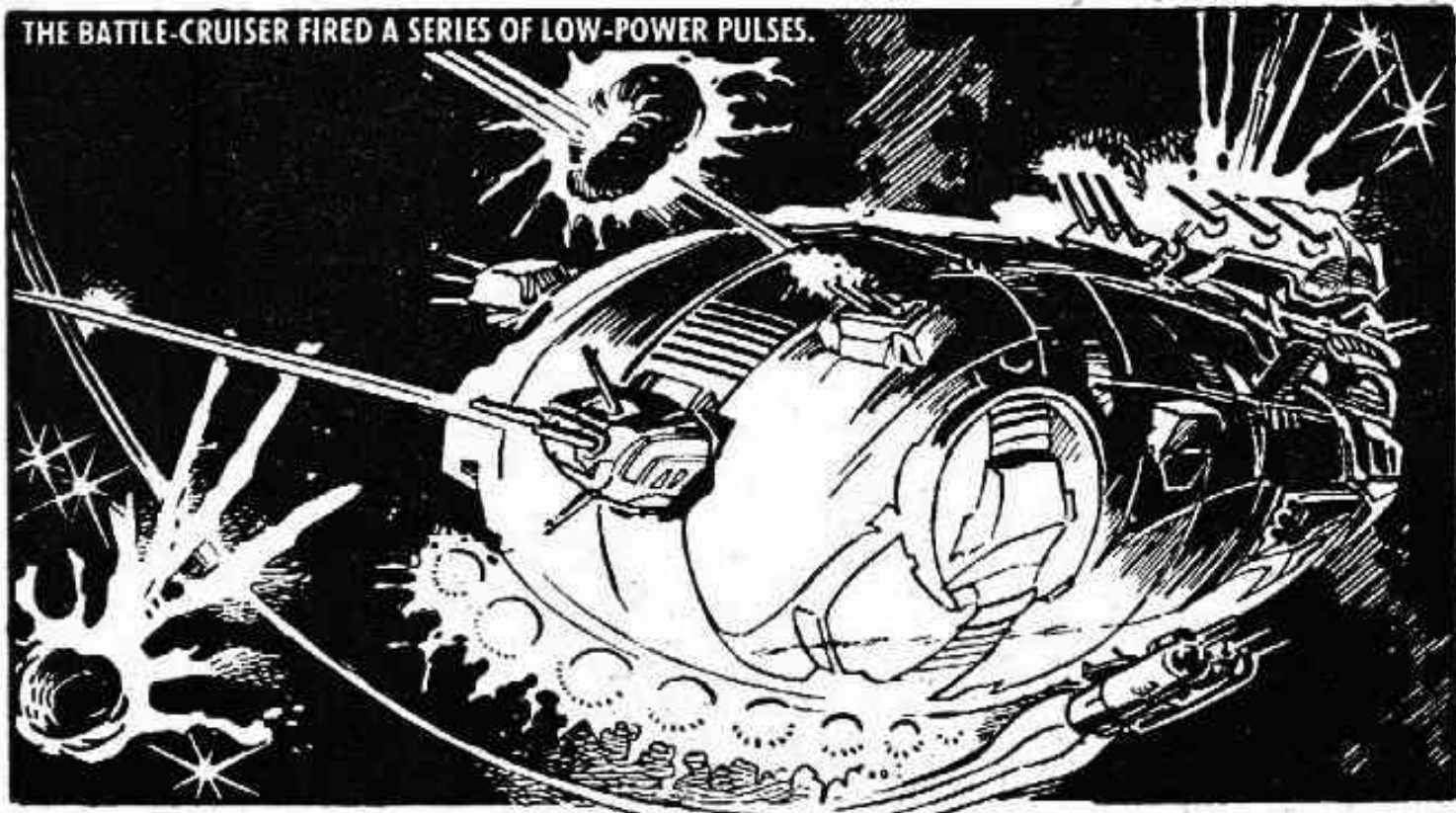


... AND WITH ANY LUCK, THEY'LL DO OUR JOB FOR US!



NOW, IF I FIRE A WIDE-DISPERSAL
PULSE, IT SHOULD OVERLOAD THEIR
WEAPONS CONTROLS LONG ENOUGH
TO LET US IN.

THE BATTLE-CRUISER FIRED A SERIES OF LOW-POWER PULSES.



THE FACTORY SHIP'S CENTRAL CONTROL GROUND TO A HALT.

THEY'VE SHORT-CIRCUITED! WE'VE
LOST ALL EXTERNAL DEFENSIVE WEAPONRY!



THE HYPERION CRUISED INTO THE HANGAR.

LOOK — THE ASTERIOS! NOW ALL
WE'VE GOT TO DO IS FIND THE OTHERS.



DEEP INSIDE THE FACTORY SHIP —

SIT DOWN, SAM. YOU'LL
ONLY WEAR YOURSELF OUT.

IT'S NO USE! EVEN IF THEY HADN'T
DISCONNECTED MY BIO-ACCELERATOR I
DOUBT IF I COULD FORCE THROUGH THIS
DOOR.

WAIT! WHAT'S
THAT NOISE?

FIGHTING? LASER RIFLES AND
BLASTERS BY THE SOUND OF IT!

THE CELL DOOR WAS SUDDENLY BLASTED ASIDE.

CHIEF! AND CRIOS! I NEVER
THOUGHT I'D SEE YOUR FUNNY FACE
AGAIN!

THANKS FOR NOTHING! NOW
GRAB ONE OF THESE DISRUPTORS.

THOUGHT YOU MIGHT
HAVE MISSED THESE.

CHIEF! BEHIND YOU!

REFLEXIVELY, NIGHTRIDER SPUN ABOUT AND FIRED THE NEUTRON BEAM FROM HIS ARM WITHOUT THINKING.



THE Q-RADIATION FILLED HIS BODY AGAIN, AND NIGHTRIDER BEGAN TO SINK INTO A COMA.

SAMURO ... GET THEM
OUT ... OF HERE ...

WE'RE GOING NOWHERE YET, CHIEF!
NOW WHERE'D CRIOS DISAPPEAR TO?



THE ANDROMORPH APPEARED MOMENTS LATER.

LOOK WHAT I FOUND LURKING
IN THE WOODWORK!

NOW LISTEN, CELAINO — NIGHTRIDER IS DYING
FROM Q-RADIATION POISONING. YOU'RE GOING TO
ANDROMORPHISE HIM, MAKE HIM IMMUNE.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YOU'RE MAD!

WE MAY HAVE THE SAME CELLULAR
MATRIX, 'BROTHER', BUT IF YOU
THINK THAT'S GOING TO STOP ME
TAKING YOU APART PIECE BY
PIECE, THINK AGAIN!

CELAINO AGREED —

WHEN HE COMES OUT OF THE
ANDROMORPHOSIS TANK, HE WILL BE WHOLE
AGAIN.

NO TRICKS, CELAINO.

QUICKLY, CELAINO PROGRAMMED THE MACHINE —

I AM NOW BREAKING HIS BODY DOWN
INTO CELLULAR UNITS, IMMUNITY TO Q-
RADIATION WILL BE PROGRAMMED IN,
AND THEN HIS BODY WILL BE REBUILT.

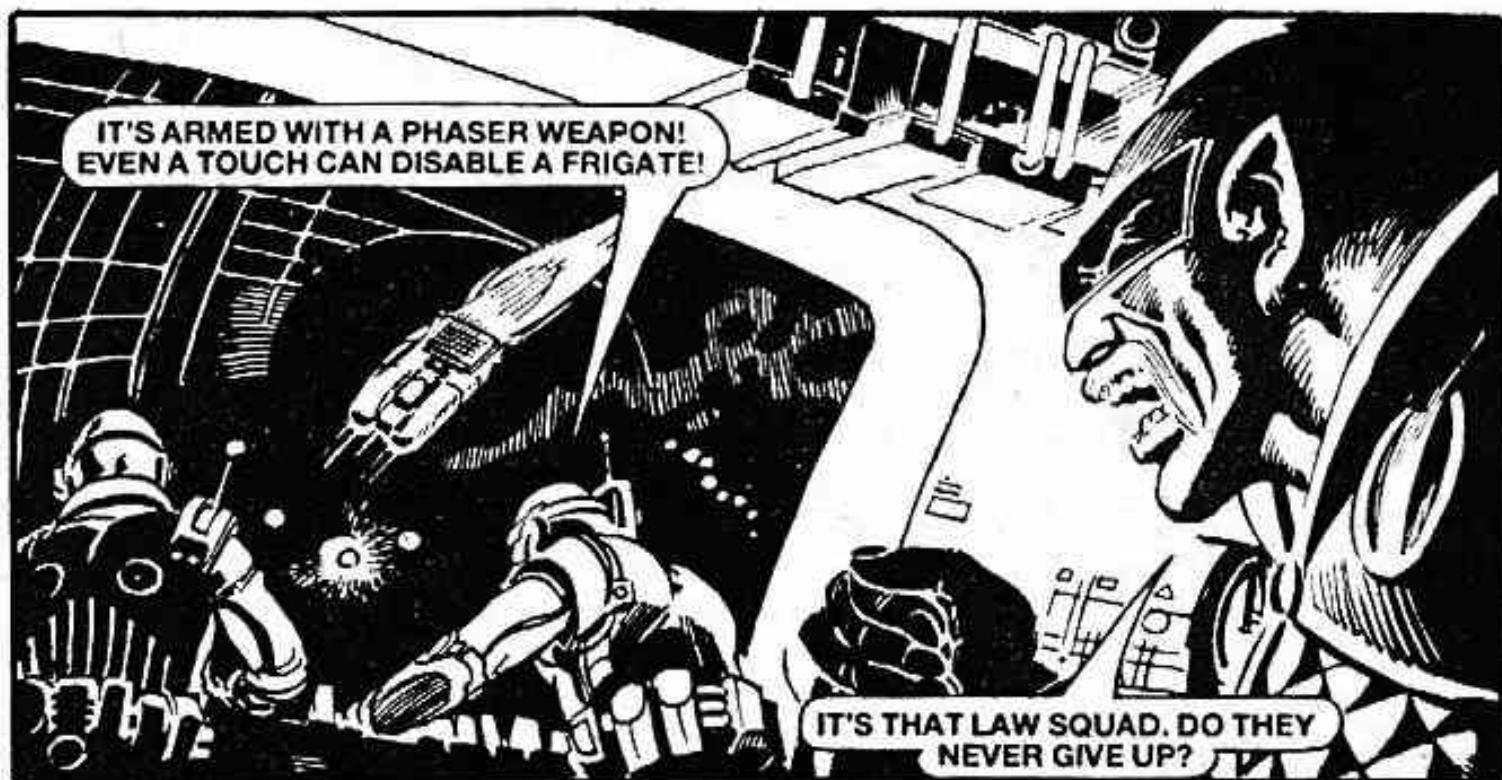
FOR YOUR SAKE, I HOPE SO. I
SHALL STAY TO MAKE SURE!

THE THREE AGENTS BOARDED HYPERION AND SET COURSE BACK TO IDAS.



A SHORT TIME LATER, ABOARD THE KRATOS FLAGSHIP.





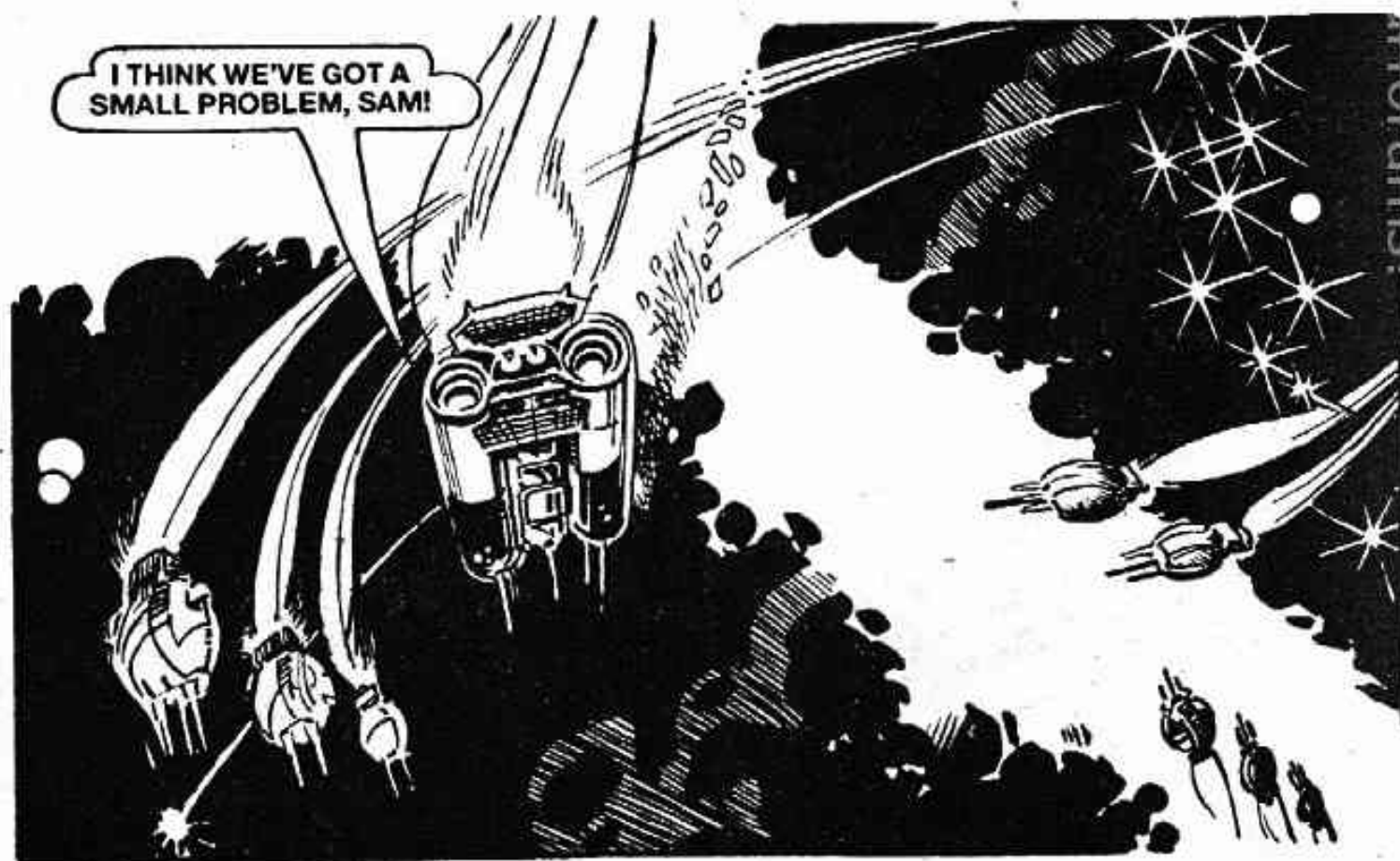
**THE HYPERION STREAKED THROUGH
THE KRATOS FLEET —**

**OUR DEFLECTOR SHIELDS ARE
COPING WITH THEIR FIRE SO FAR.**

**WE'RE HOME
FREE, SAM!**

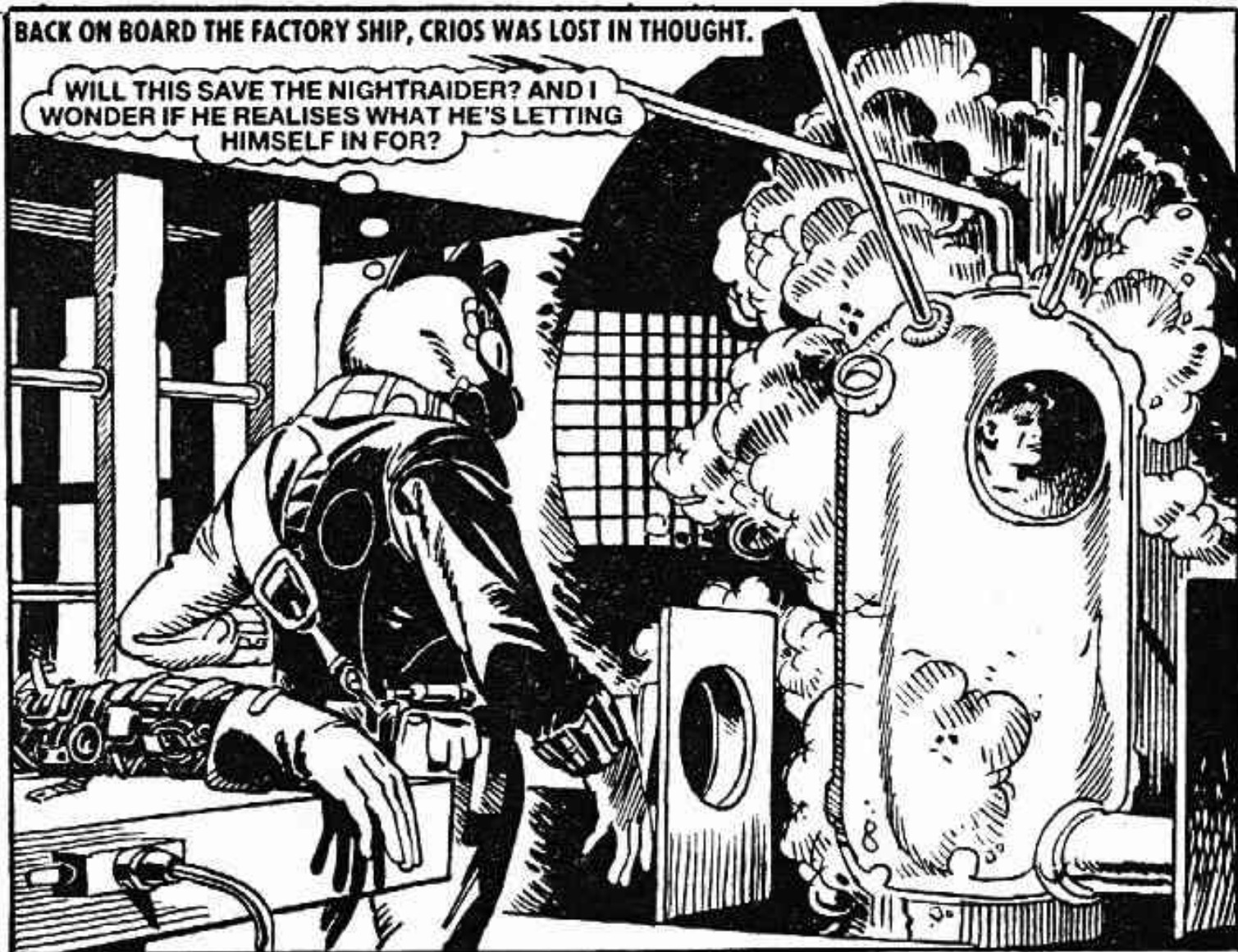
**BUT A CONCENTRATED BROADSIDE
SUDDENLY BREACHED THE CRUISER'S
SHIELDS.**

**SAM! URSA!
WE'RE HIT!**



BACK ON BOARD THE FACTORY SHIP, CRIOS WAS LOST IN THOUGHT.

WILL THIS SAVE THE NIGHTRAIDER? AND I WONDER IF HE REALISES WHAT HE'S LETTING HIMSELF IN FOR?



CRIOS FAILED TO HEAR THE FAINT CHINK OF METAL BEHIND HIM.



CELAINO KILLED HIS 'BROTHER' WITH THE NEUTRON-BEAMER —

ALWAYS THE DREAMER, CRIOS?
WELL — DREAM FOREVER!



NOW CELAINO FAILED TO NOTICE SOMETHING ...
THE ANDROMORPHOSIS TANK HAD SHUT OFF.

I SHOULD THANK YOU 'BROTHER'.
I'M FREE OF JORJEO'S LITTLE
PLANS NOW — I CAN BEGIN MY
OWN EMPIRE OF ANDROMORPHS!





STRANGE ENERGY SHOT OUT FROM THE NEW LEFT ARM



A DEADLY BLAST OF ENERGY FILLED THE CHAMBER, KILLING CELAINO INSTANTLY.

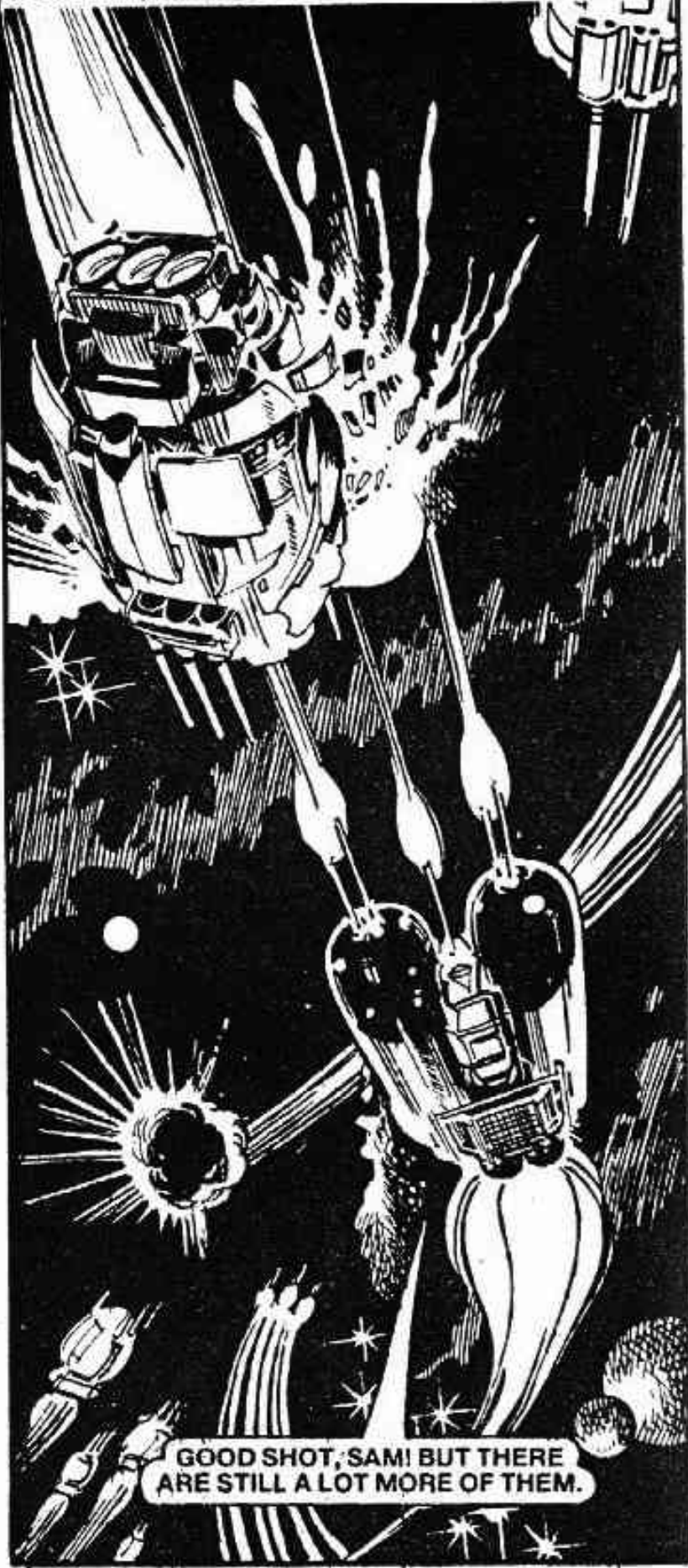


FINDING HIS SPACE SUIT, HE HURRIED TO THE FACTORY SHIP'S CONTROL CENTRE.



NOW TO
GET TO IDAS.

ABOVE IDAS, THE HYPERION WAS STRUGGLING BRAVELY.



GOOD SHOT, SAM! BUT THERE
ARE STILL A LOT MORE OF THEM.

HOLD ON, URSA! HOW CAN HE DO IT,
SAM? ENDURE ALL THIS AND STILL
PILOT THE SHIP?

IT'S CALLED COURAGE, TYPHON. NOW
GET ON YOUR SENSORCOMM — THEY'RE
THROWING SOMETHING ELSE AT US!

ANDROMORPHS BRED TO LIVE IN VACUUM LANDED ON
THE HULL AND BEGAN TO DESTROY THE EXTERNAL
SENSORY EQUIPMENT, LEAVING HYPERION BLIND AND
SENSELESS.

THEN, SALVATION STRUCK, IN THE SHAPE OF PLASMA BOLTS.

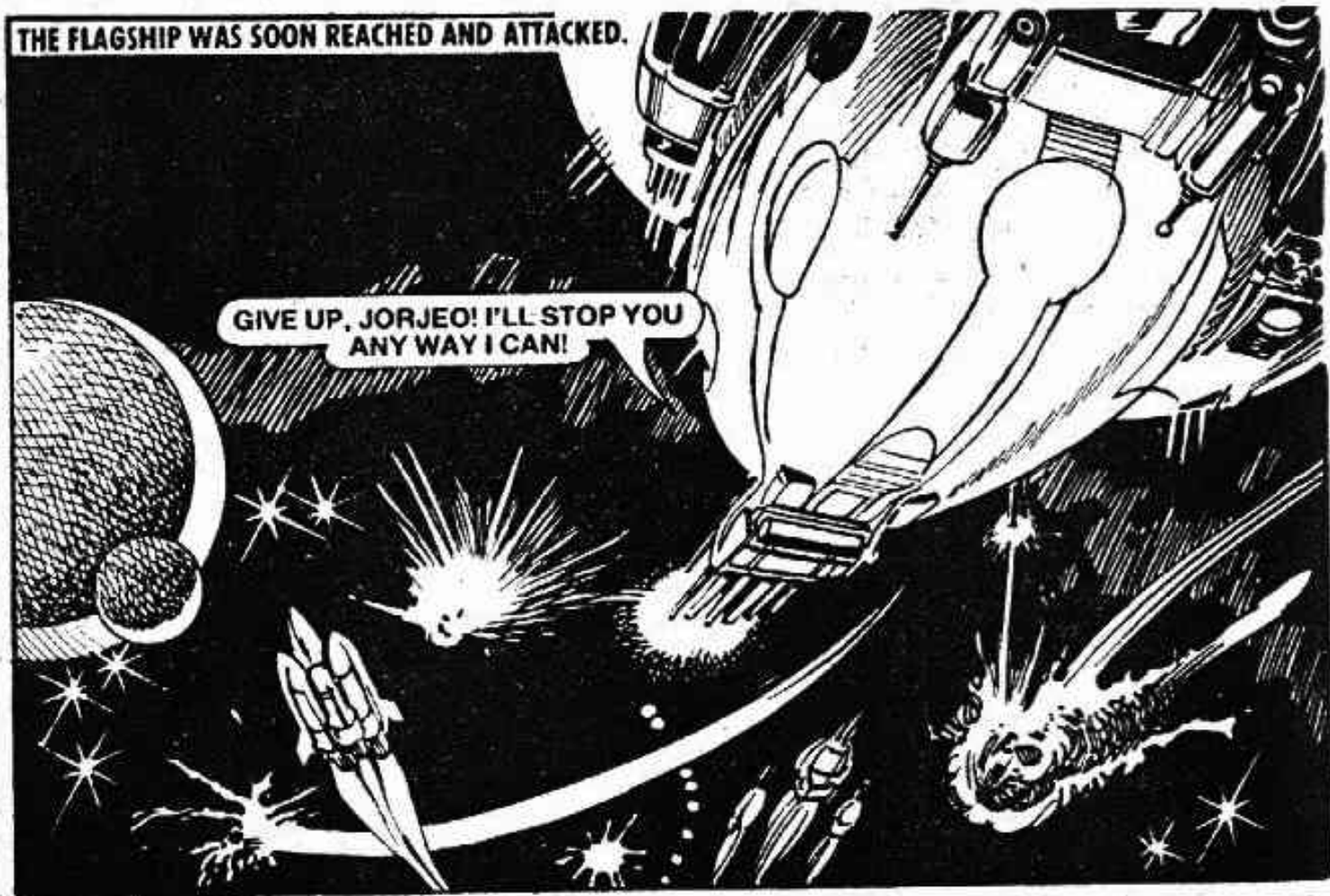
PLASMA BOLTS!
WE'VE BEEN SAVED!

ATTENTION, HYPERION! GET IN
BEHIND ME — I'M GOING AFTER THE TOP MAN!

IT'S NIGHTRAIDER!

THE FLAGSHIP WAS SOON REACHED AND ATTACKED.

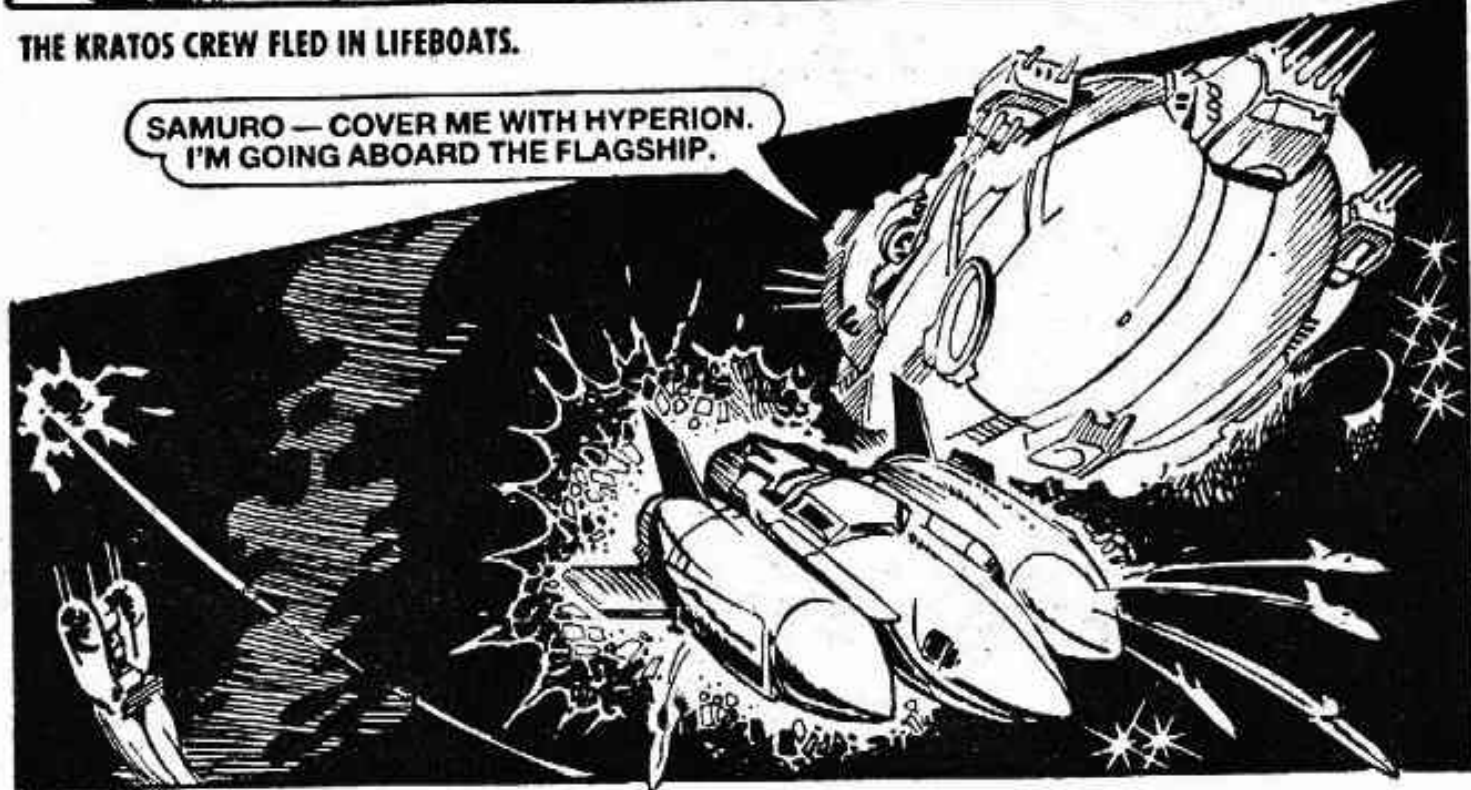
GIVE UP, JORJEO! I'LL STOP YOU
ANY WAY I CAN!



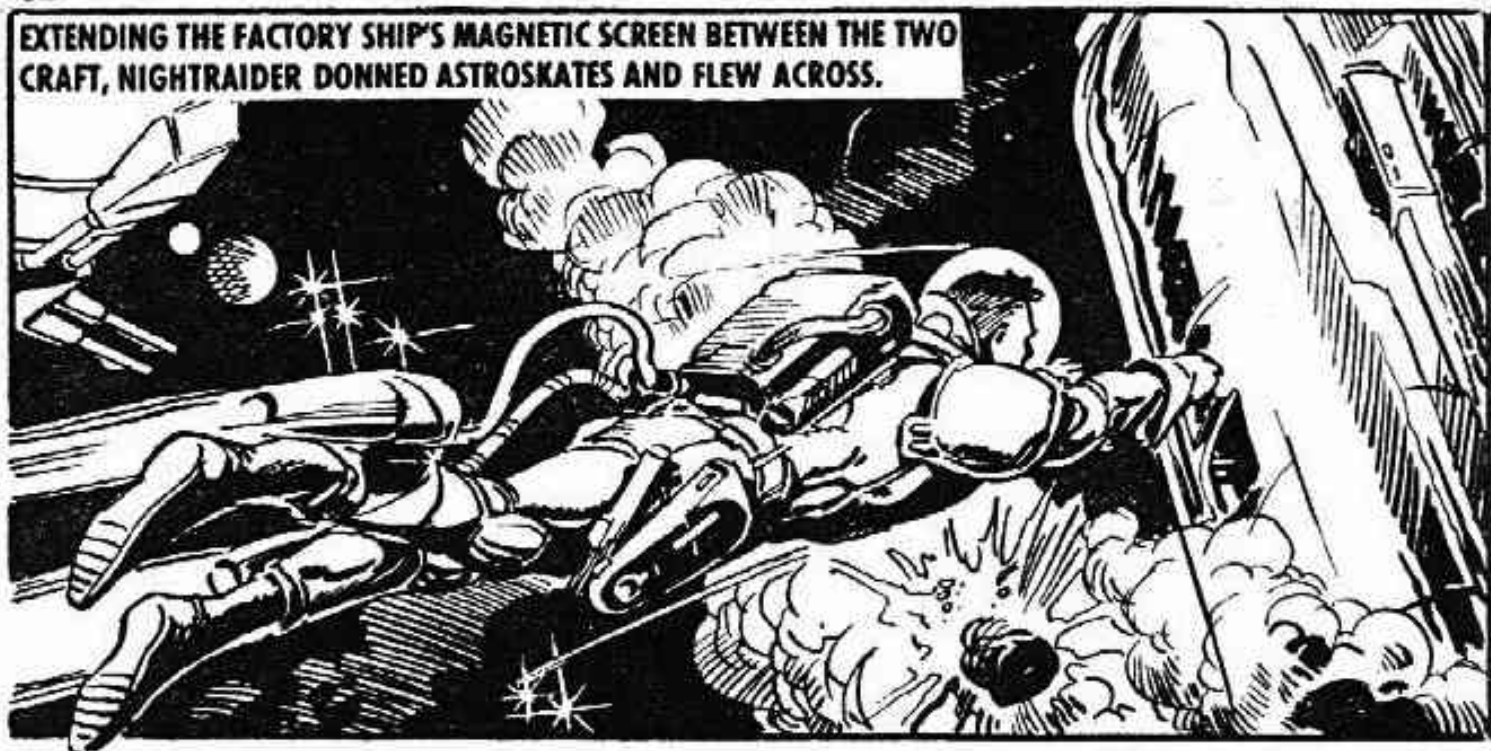


THE KRATOS CREW FLED IN LIFEBOATS.

SAMURO — COVER ME WITH HYPERION.
I'M GOING ABOARD THE FLAGSHIP.



EXTENDING THE FACTORY SHIP'S MAGNETIC SCREEN BETWEEN THE TWO CRAFT, NIGHTRAIDER DONNED ASTROSKATES AND FLEW ACROSS.



ONCE ON BOARD —

IF I SET THE AUTODESTRUCT AND AIM THE SHIP AT THE HEART OF THE KRATOS FLEET, THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING.



WORKING INTENTLY, HE FAILED TO HEAR THE DOOR BEHIND OPEN STEALTHILY.

GREETINGS! I THOUGHT
I'D WAIT AROUND AND SEE IF YOU'D SHOW.

I DID! IN FIVE MINUTES THE
WHOLE SHIP GOES NOVA.

JORJEO WAS ALSO AN ANDROMORPH —

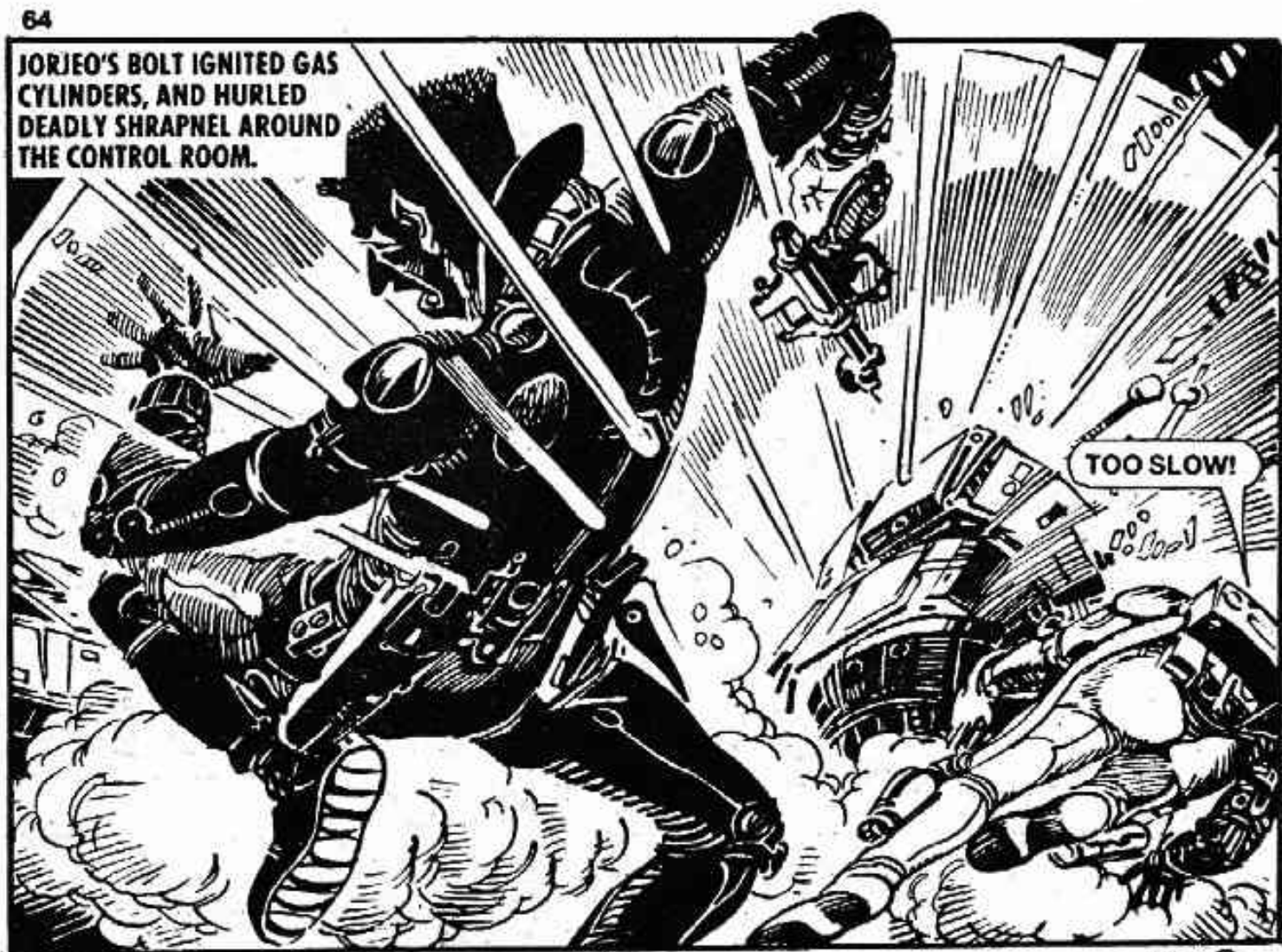
SORRY I WON'T BE HERE TO
WATCH. CELAINO HAS ALREADY
STARTED A NEW ORDER — THE
ANDROMORPH ORDER —
FUNDED BY KRATOS.
WE'LL GROW A WHOLE GALAXY-
FUL, AND THE HUMAN DAY
WILL BE OVER. GOODBYE!

JORJEO SLOWLY SQUEEZED
THE TRIGGER OF HIS BLASTER.

BUT BEFORE THE GUN FIRED, NIGHTRAIDER
WAS ALREADY MOVING.

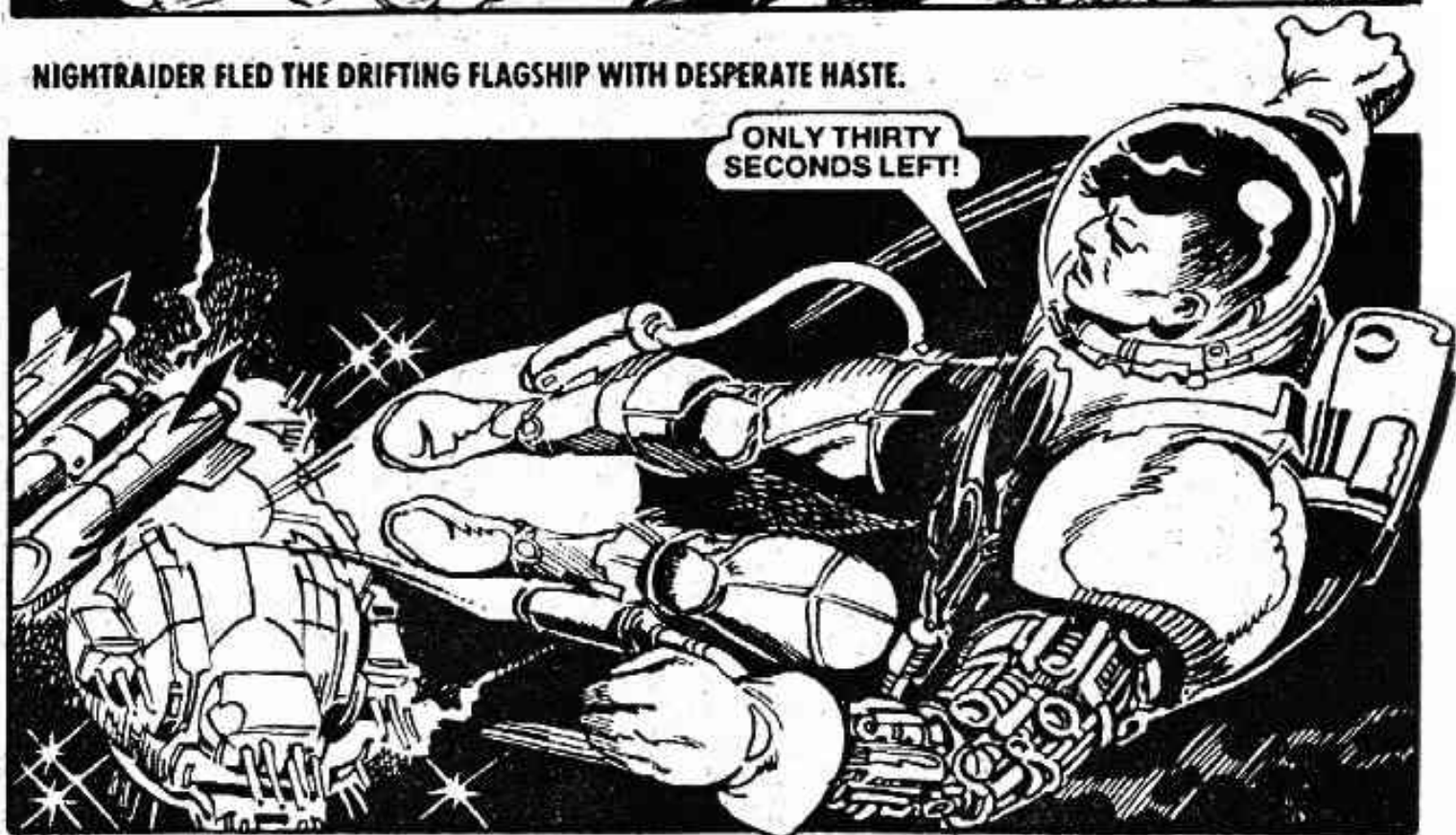
CELAINO IS DEAD! AND
SO WILL YOU BE SOON.

JORJELO'S BOLT IGNITED GAS CYLINDERS, AND HURLED DEADLY SHRAPNEL AROUND THE CONTROL ROOM.



NIGHTRIDER FLED THE DRIFTING FLAGSHIP WITH DESPERATE HASTE.

ONLY THIRTY SECONDS LEFT!



WITH A BLINDING FLASH, THE FLAGSHIP DETONATED. IN ONE INSTANT OF TIME, NEARLY THE ENTIRE KRATOS FLEET BECAME INTERSTELLAR DUST.



A SHORT WHILE LATER, NIGHTRAIDER CONTACTED THE HYPERION.

I'VE ALREADY CALLED THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FOR A CLEAN-UP SQUAD. IDAS WILL SOON BE CLEAR OF THE KRATOS ANDROMORPHS. WAIT HERE FOR THEM — IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO. MY NEW BODY SUPPLIES ME WITH POWER TO TRAVEL SPACE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A SPACECRAFT!



DON'T ARGUE, TYPHON. YOU KNOW I CAN NO LONGER RETURN TO EARTH. I AM NOW AN ANDROMORPH — I SHALL BE DECLASSIFIED. SPACE IS MY HOME, EARTH IS YOURS. GO BACK, AND LOOK AFTER IT.

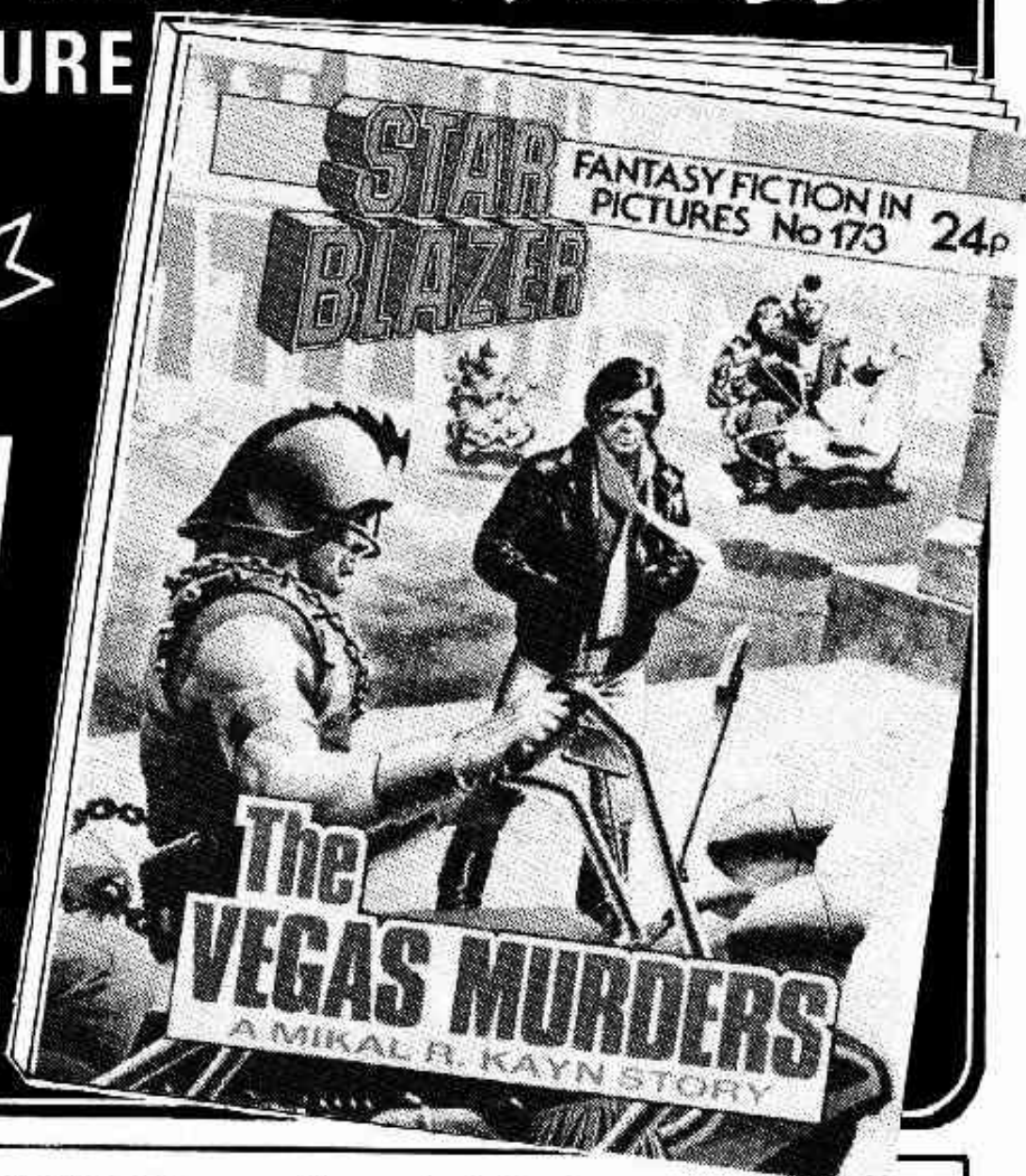


NIGHTRAIDER, ANDROMORPH, VANISHED AMONGST THE STARS, UNABLE TO RETURN TO THE EARTH HE HAD SAVED, BUT ALWAYS READY TO PROTECT IT.

DON'T MISS THIS MONTH'S
OTHER *ACTION-PACKED*
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NIGHTRAIDER

**They made the Mafia look like a charity organisation.
He was the only person who could stop them.
They had unlimited credits, men and machines.
He had one craft and three helpers.
They were the Kratos . . .
he was Nightraider.**

